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# THE WAGE OF CHARACTER

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# THE WAGE OF CHARACTER

## A SOCIAL STUDY

BY

JULIEN GORDON Pseud.

Author of "Mrs. Clyde," "A Puritan Pagan," "His Letters," etc.

Julie Gordon

NEW YORK

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1901

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# THE WAGE OF CHARACTER

## PART FIRST

"Better," sang Yoshida Shoin, "to be a crystal and to be broken than to be a tile upon the housetop and to remain."

### I

ROMANTIC friendship between young men is rare in the United States. Where the intercourse of the sexes is made so easy, girls and boys are prone to give their childish confidences to each other. In their maturer years, American men seek the companionship of women as a respite from the pressure of drudging routine and ugly environment. In fact, once free from the mart and the forum, they are apt to

shun one another. The clubs, to be sure, are convenient places in which to dine and play cards, but they are not Meccas of social solace.

There are, however, timid and reserved souls to whom the barrier of sex always remains an intangible obstacle to deep communion. They seem the very ones who would drink refreshment and courage from the fountain of feminine sympathy; they are the very ones who forego it. Why? The question is unanswerable. Perhaps some early slight to vanity, some never forgotten wound dealt by a thoughtless feminine hand, has sunk its sting of doubt and distress into their mind. Perhaps they know that in them lies a capability for morbid suffering of which woman holds the key. They prefer safety to danger. Somewhat cowardly, they hug the

shores, and are contented that their male friends should hoist the sail and woo the winds.

Hamilton Darrell, when at college, was not known to have a girl or woman friend. He certainly had no mistress. Yet he was no woman hater. On the contrary, he respected women and could make himself sufficiently agreeable to them. But he did not give himself to their pursuit. They, on their part, met him, if civilly, with indifference. There is a certain form of moral superiority in men which women secretly resent. This Darrell possessed. All the romance that inspired his nature, all the desire to look up and reverence, all the ambition for another's success which seems a part of well-balanced characters, he bestowed on a male comrade. He seemed to find sufficient pleasure in the triumphs of his friend. Somewhat

weak of frame, unblest with physical beauty, insignificant in person, he seemed to warm himself in the rays of Hazard Thorne's vitality. Hazard, *en bon prince,* allowed himself to be admired. The young men had rooms together in Cambridge, apartments fitted up with elegance, not to say luxury, and were—one by reason of his dominant personality, the other of his wealth—leaders of their particular set.

Thorne was not a pauper and Darrell was not repellent; but it is only on large lines that we reach conclusions. Penniless, the latter might have passed through four years of college life unobserved to graduation, while Thorne's income was too insignificant to lift him from obscurity. Darrell was very rich. He was in full possession of large rentals left to him by a bachelor uncle after whom he was named. At twenty-one

he touched a capital mounting into millions. His people were of the West. His father, a railroad magnate, had himself made and lost several fortunes. There were those who thought he would die poor. As he was a widower, with only two children—Hamilton, who was provided for, and his daughter Coralie—it was probable that there would be sufficient. Even his profligate expenditure would hardly leave the girl portionless. Yet there were moments when she herself felt anxiety, and once or twice already Hamilton had been obliged to come to the family's rescue. His father's methods, ideas, schemes, were strangely antagonistic to his more prudent temper. He was always uneasy, never happy, in Mr. Darrell, Senior's, presence. The elder man himself found little attraction in the fellowship of his only son. It was, per-

haps, because of this harsh note in the home atmosphere that Hamilton attached himself so strongly to Hazard Thorne.

The demonstrations of this affection were not highly coloured; never expressed in words. Even in deeds they lacked *éclat.* When he helped Hazard out of a scrape it was done, as it were, *sub rosa* and with a certain doggedness. He hated ostentatious beneficence only less than he hated gratitude. Notwithstanding this absence of sentimentality in their relations, Thorne had implicit faith in his chum's loyalty. It was one of the beliefs he held intact.

It may be said that Thorne's scrapes were not of a very serious sort. His embarrassments were generally financial. He was extravagant. To his entanglements of gallantry he brought, at this time of his career, a certain skil-

ful self-defence and coldness. This may have arisen from dryness of heart or fastidiousness of temper, according to the situation or the point of view. Hamilton was inclined to accept the latter interpretation—to believe that his friend suffered a sense of profanation where others saw only amusement, and this because there was something in him profound and real. The young ladies whom Thorne sometimes encountered at students' suppers in Boston, whose eyes were a little too dark, whose complexions were a little too fair, and whose lips were a little too red, left his senses at liberty to find escape. Their toils did not entrap more than their chains weighed, while the dainty maidens of Beacon or Mount Vernon Street and the youthful matrons who chaperoned them, with their smooth, Greek-knotted hair, their clear,

frank eyes, their thoughtful foreheads and the sharp outline of their chaste lips, failed to fire his imagination.

Shoulder to shoulder the friends fought their way through the changing fortune, enlightening experience and keen ordeal of college contest. Thorne graduated an easy victor in the classic as in the athletic arena, and with the calmness that conceals nerves of steel. Darrell, somewhat breathless, followed him; industrious in all studies, admirable in a few, a hopeless failure in sport. They took becoming honours. Thorne just missed the head of his class by a duck-shooting excursion on the eve of the examinations; Darrell, who did not shoot ducks, came in a highly commended fourth.

The friends felt a mixed sense of freedom and of pain when they packed their boxes, pulled down their curtains,

emptied their book-shelves and blew out their lamps for the last time in their cosy Cambridge quarters. The chambers presented on this final evening the curious dusty forlornness of human habitations about to be vacated. Yesterday a tidy, orderly, graceful home; to-day a dirty, disorganized, vulgar domicile, a roof no more, whose discomfort one marvels to have endured. The sympathy of material things with one's own moods is one of the quaint studies of the reflective. The hotel bears the imprint of the transitory; the tenantless house is like a physiognomy without eyes. It has a blind stare as if it would say to the visitor, "What seekest thou here?" The pain was more Darrell's than Thorne's. The former's life was made for him, hence pale; Thorne's was full of that element of uncertainty dear to adventurous spirits.

Its possibilities were boundless; at least, so thought Darrell. He himself might dabble in science, politics, affairs. He knew the way forever made light, and that he would remain a dilettante. Not brilliant, not original, he inherited from a timid mother that effaced type which in her was accentuated by the crushing association with her tyrannic and powerful lord. Darrell blenched, as she had, before publicity. It was perhaps this shrinking quality, which his father called weakness, that so attached him to Hazard Thorne.

Hazard's taste was perfect. He was incapable of ridiculing what was delicate. This inherent taste he drew from a refined ancestry. Early an orphan, he had been brought up in the houses of two uncles. These uncles, the possessors of adequate fortunes, were in their

day men of fashion and of importance. Owners of inherited wealth, they were never men of affairs. Like many well-born and well-nurtured New Yorkers, they had, after dawdling in German and English universities, filled posts in foreign embassies. When they returned to their own city they found themselves crowded out by Yankee invaders. Lacking the wish or the stamina to stem the current, they took themselves to their respective Hudson River estates — also inherited — and there led the useless, profitless, but decent existence of the American country gentleman. Here they nursed their worn-out traditions, tempered with a certain hostility against the encroachments of the new forces. No sons having been born to their households, the only descendant of a dead brother became as an own child to them. Rather

to their disgust, he from boyhood insisted that if he was to go to college he would enter Harvard. They pointed out to him the advantage of English seats of learning, and one of them exhibited a sword-cut received at Heidelberg. If not these, why was not Columbia good enough for a child of Knickerbocker lineage? Then the wife of one of these gentlemen, who, though Dutch on one side of her house, was suspected of hiding predilections for New England enterprise, push, and possible pie, through a drop of Puritan ichor in her veins, remonstrated. She advised that the lad be given his own way. She also added, under her breath, that perhaps, after all, there might be some merit in people who had so successfully pushed the aborigines of Manhattan to the wall. In so saying she looked across the table somewhat defiantly at her

husband, meeting his frowning astonishment with irreverent laughter. Being a woman of humour who sometimes wrote "upon the lintel of her door-post 'whim,'" her sortie was forgiven her as a vagary of sex. However, she gained her point. The recalcitrant nephew was sent to Massachusetts.

The brothers, smoking their pipes on the stately porch of one of their colonial dwellings, had, one night, decided the momentous question, not without much misgiving and protest and shaking of the head, possibly with some of those mystic signals with which Washington Irving tells us the doughty Antony Van Corlear's protests were met by Killian Van Rensselaer.

Thorne certainly learned far more at his *alma mater* than to pull an oar or construe Juvenal. What he unlearned

was more to the purpose. He shook off a good deal of foolish family pride, rubbed away some prejudices, lost many ready-made opinions and also a vast amount of self-importance. It is only when we have gauged our own helplessness that we are really prepared to stand on our feet. The friends had entered Harvard as the last bugle of peace sounded over their country. The aroma of valour and heroism lingered over those fresh memorials to the brave boys who shouldered their muskets and fell before their race had begun. They sometimes regretted that they were too late to face that mighty struggle before which other nations stood appalled. Now they sat and talked far into the night over their unknown futures.

"I have got to settle right down to work," said Thorne, with a quaint gri-

mace, "to repair my much damaged fortunes."

Darrell laughed. He never smoked, but watched the fumes curl upward from Thorne's half-burned cigar.

"What are you looking at?"

"Are you superstitious?"

"We all are, I suppose. I'll be hanged if I care to have that black cat I met in the Delta so attentive to me as she was last night. It is deuced bad luck for a fellow who has got a lot of debts and not a ducat to pay them with to be followed about by a black cat. But why do you ask?"

"I said to myself that if that spiral column of smoke you blew into space a second ago reached the height of the bust of Homer before dispersing, I should have my wish."

"Well?"

"Well, it did." Darrell's discursive

mind went on irrelevantly. "That smoke! what an epitome of character!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—" he threw back his head on the worn cushion of the condemned easy chair he had presented to his landlady in the morning—"I mean there are two types of human beings in this world—those who scatter like the smoke, and those who concentrate."

"Explain."

"Philosophers—the Hamlets—who talk over what they would be at while others marry their mothers and jump into their fathers' fortunes, are the former. In emergency they scatter, hence remain ineffectual."

"You believe in one object and its hot chase, and no deviation to right or to left?"

"Exactly; no awakening to 'alien horns.'"

"It means sacrifice and a good deal of brutality," said Thorne, reflectively.

"Oh, it is, after all, a matter of temperament. The scatterer overrates obstacle, dignifies his antagonist, acknowledges defeat possible—perhaps deserved. The concentrator pooh-poohs obstacle, calls his antagonist a buffoon, knows he'll get there, and he does."

"I think I understand you. I've seen that sort of thing in public speakers. Self-trust gives the moral support required. One can't speak without conviction, any more than one can be a martyr for a cause in which one has ceased to believe. It is graceless enough to uphold anything without its faith."

"I have seen it in everything," said Darrell. "There was a lady once, a neighbour of ours, a rich woman, who

had schemes of philanthropy. She instituted picnics for the town children on her grounds. Two children overate themselves; one of them died. I understand a little girl got sunstruck. She gave up her picnics the second year. She was a scatterer."

"Ha! ha! ha! In other words, she allowed herself to pause and reflect on the healthfulness of picnics in general, for city children in particular, and was lost."

"Yes, and the picnics. An excellent charity. Nobody of that kidney ever accomplishes anything."

"Overeating and sunstroke are mere side issues, not to be regarded by philanthropic genius," declared Thorne.

"Not to be paused for," added Darrell.

"And you, old man?"

"I am a scatterer in both intellect

and character—weak-kneed and weak-livered. I'd stop to pick up the wounded on the battle-field, and lose the day. That sort of thing a true soldier knows can be done just as well after the battle."

"With a few more dead."

"With a few more dead! That is immaterial; the only thing of consequence in a battle is—victory. Ask the commanders."

"And I?"

"Your intellect concentrates. Sometimes I have feared . . ."

"For my character?"

"The future must prove."

"Then you think one and the same person may scatter in character and not in intellect, and *vice versa?*"

"Precisely."

"You've got a truthful mind, Hamilton."

"To my cost."

"Isn't it thought that rules the world?"

"Perhaps, in the long run. But no one life can use thought for its own benefit. We thinkers go to the wall. Providence knew I never could earn a ducat, and so sent me my bread and butter. I am grateful."

"Do you believe in Providence?"

"Yes, and in compensation and retribution."

"The wicked flourish."

"Do they? How do you know they flourish?"

"They are getting along."

"No, they're not, they're deteriorating; that's the only retribution, but that's as sure as death. Lost possibilities of character! how melancholy!"

There was a silence between the two. Did it hold prophecy?

After a moment Thorne spoke. "And your wish? You have scattered away from it."

"Oh, the wish!"

"Let's have it."

"You could help it along."

"Nonsense! You are the most tenacious fellow alive, once you've made up your mind to a thing. I'll bet on you, Darrell, every time, though you pose for inconsequence. If you're the living image of your mother, as your daddy once told me, you're a chip of the old man as far as obstinacy is concerned."

"Weak people are apt to be obstinate; only the strong are supple," he said. "My pig-headedness can't help me this time unless several other people are unexpectedly supple."

"Are they of the putty order?"

"No; you are not, are you?"

"More than you guess. A child can

bit and bridle me. I have got a slavish nature."

"Bah!"

"One has only to know how."

"There's one bit and bridle I'm afraid of for you."

"Eh?"

"Your laziness."

"I like that, after all this year's cramming."

"There are moments with you when it becomes a passion and rides you."

"Oh, saintly moral, where dost thou build thy nest?" laughed Thorne, stretching his long limbs.

He had a figure that men who liked him called spare, the women whom he had failed to flatter, lank.

"It all lies in the palm of our own hand, the moral of the tale," Darrell went on. "This one has a beginning."

"Hear! hear!"

The light vein of pleasantry died out of Darrell's words, and his small, deep eyes gleamed under their dark, arched eyebrows with sudden earnestness.

"You never met my little sister, did you, Hazard?"

"When you put me up to roost in the parent tree Miss Darrell was abroad with an aunt."

"She has returned."

There was another silence. Thorne was evidently expected to say something, but nothing in particular occurred to him. He had seen a photograph, slightly faded and more or less speckled, ornating for four years his companion's dressing-table. It represented the far from prepossessing profile of a school-girl in a high-necked black pinafore, with a braid of hair hanging over one shoulder. He remem-

bered that when, on more than one occasion, he had inadvertently glanced toward it, he had regretted his inability to express the slightest commendation. Miss Darrell's very name now seemed to dry up the springs of enthusiasm. This cast over his features a comical distress. His friend must have observed his dilemma, for he laughed more heartily than was his habit. Nevertheless, the laugh once over, gave place to an expression bordering on uneasiness.

"You looked so absurd," he said.

"Thanks. Don't stop; go on, don't mind me."

"You seem to think . . ."

"What in the name of thunder, Darrell, are you driving at?"

"I spoke of my sister. I am worried about her. I hate the old woman she has been travelling with, my fa-

ther's sister; she's worse than he would be—I mean worse as a guide to an inexperienced girl. She's a perfect baby; knows nothing of the world—Coralie, I mean—and she's an impulsive little girl, and now——"

"Now?"

"She has gone and got herself mixed up with a miserable gutter-snipe of a secretary of legation over there, an Englishman who has already sent his lawyer to look after settlements. I have been making inquiries. I don't like anything I hear about him. He doesn't amount to anything; I guess he never will. He is consumptive, too, or at least his family is. To us these English fortune-hunters seem so effeminate in their attitude toward women. As lovers they are so fussy and feeble. I am quite willing to admit them men in war and sport, but they expect the

girls to look after them. Their selfishness is sublime. We like to protect women."

"I'm sure, my dear Darrell, you know I'm all yours if I can do anything to serve you at any time," said Thorne, a trifle stiffly; "but our women seem to enjoy this form of slavery."

"She isn't a bit like that little photo," Darrell went on. "Bless me, where is it? Oh, in the valise! What a wilderness our poor den looks to-night, eh, Hazard? That was taken years ago. She doesn't take well. She is grown up now; she's a dear litle girl; I'm awfully fond of her. Hers, at any rate, isn't a slavish mind, and I want her out of this nonsense."

In answer to this somewhat incoherent apostrophe Thorne murmured that he had no doubt Miss Coralie Darrell was all a brother could desire or de-

serve, and that he thought photographs were proverbially inadequate. He ended by repeating, "If ever I can serve you, Darrell, you can count on me."

"You can serve me."

"Name the test."

"Cut the Englishman out!"

The words were spoken. Never again could the maiden's name be pronounced between these two in unconsciousness.

"You do me too much honour," said Thorne, with a forced laugh.

"I would give her half my fortune," said Darrell.

## II

THORNE emphasized his intention of cutting out the secretary of legation by a year's travel in Europe. The friends kept up a desultory telegraphic correspondence, monosyllabic, unimportant, after the manner of intimate Anglo-Saxons. When he landed in New York on his return, he took up the study of law. In those days the course could be abridged more easily than now. He was admitted to the bar eighteen months later.

Of Darrell he really knew little except that he had bought a ranch in Texas and was amusing himself sheep-shearing. Their letters had left them

in darkness as to each other's private affairs. But one day Darrell got tired of his enterprise and took train for New York, deciding that as the Western centre of science, art, commerce and society, it was the only fit place in America for feeling men to inhabit.

"I am going to build a house here to put my books and togs in," he said to Thorne. "It will be pleasant for my little sister to visit." They were dining together at the Union Club, of which Thorne was a member, and at which Darrell was put up for a fortnight, pending more definite recognition.

"Oh, by the way, how did your sister's love affair end? She isn't married, is she?"

"It didn't end."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. It's still on."

For some unexplained reason

Thorne felt annoyed. Such constancy did not accord with his opinions of human conduct.

"What's the matter? Haven't you relented?" he asked, a little ironically.

"I haven't, and what's more to the purpose, my father hasn't."

"Doesn't care to support a member of an effete aristocracy, eh, and that sort of thing?" said Thorne, laughing.

"That's about the size of it."

"And the young lady is sure of her admirer's sincerity? He *is* sincere, then. I'll bet on an American girl's *flair*."

"I can't make out if she is infatuated or not. Girls are so queer! But he is a sickly sort of a chap, and that, somehow, seems to appeal to her. She thinks we have ill used him."

"Ah, I see! Pity plays a part."

"She's a good girl."

They drank wine and talked of its flavour, smacking their lips after the manner of youthful connoisseurs.

"Is the—er—young gentleman in America?" asked Thorne, abruptly.

"Not just now; but they correspond."

"Why don't you give the poor little things something to live on and your blessing, if your governor won't? You are awfully hard, Darrell."

His friend's brow darkened.

"Perhaps I am, but I would rather see her in her grave."

"Whew!"

"He may be attached to her now, but in the beginning he was after other things."

"My boy, I know you! I have tested you! Don't put me down, I beg, in that genial category of men who are generous with other people's money.

They are the largest-handed fellows in the world. They dispense with regal heartiness. I don't doubt you have the best of reasons."

"I haven't liked his methods; and as to Coralie's becoming a sick nurse, if you knew her as I do it would amuse you."

Thorne conjured up once more the profile, the pinafore and the hanging braid. They said nothing to him of the butterfly such a chrysalis should hatch.

"She is a wild colt," said Miss Darrell's brother.

The tenderness that could cling to a presumably suffering adorer seemed incongruous with these last descriptive epithets. Thorne began to think he might have done Miss Coralie an injustice. But he asked no further questions. There was much else to say and to hear. He was himself not

wholly heart-free at this moment. He had lately been subjected to peculiar trial, and was sore and in need of coddling. He did not bare his soul to Darrell, but told him enough to arouse attention and obtain sympathy. He was on the rebound of a hateful experience that had left an odious taste in his mouth. He had been gulled—an experience peculiarly unpleasant to those whose vanity is accustomed to triumph. Rience, the knight, who purflewed his mantle with the beards of his rivals, did not take kindly, we fancy, to feminine perfidies when directed against himself. Darrell, on his part, had much to recount of that busy life of plain and saddle which has lured so many feckless wights to their disaster.

It was late when, arm in arm, the two sauntered up Fifth Avenue. In those days Fiftieth Street was "up

town" and the splendours of the Plaza or the West Side were undeveloped. Glancing up at St. Patrick's Cathedral, still in process of construction, the young men stopped for a moment to speak of the force of that old faith, with its sacerdotal power and enforced obedience.

"It's the only religion for women and the poor," said Thorne.

"What an old-fashioned juxtaposition! Why not women and angels?"

"Late experiments have not served to fortify my belief in feminine wings," said Thorne, dryly.

"My dear boy, we must judge *en masse*, and not from individual tests."

"Granted. And the *masse* remains swayed by Catholicity, whose influence we Protestants try in vain to emulate or counteract. It is not enough to study vice and virtue, and

prate of them. People *want* to obey, and to gain this submission one must seduce and impress—make a man the puppet of his hope. The Protestant divines seem to lack knowledge of the soul of the crowd—a knowledge that every leader needs."

"Yet Italy and Spain—what do you find there to warrant your assertion that Protestantism fails?"

"Ah, well—nations, like men, must be born, must struggle and rise, then rot and fall. Those old countries but follow out their doom. Religion is at best but a feeble bastion against the fateful tides of the general law of temporal decay and material death. But if the hopes it brings are to be prized, the aspirations treasured, I'm inclined to believe the Romanists have got the right message. Up at my uncle's, on the Hudson, in the villages, the boys

and girls bray hymns and blow bellows and eat jam at the meeting-house and at 'sociables,' as they call their church merry-makings, and it has about as much effect on their morals as sweeping cobwebs off the moon."

"And what do you think of the Established Church and our branch of the Episcopal communion?"

"Always, up there, the church where I go—when I do go—is half-filled on summer mornings with languid summer residents, if the day is agreeable and they have no more amusing occupation, and quite empty in winter of both rich and poor."

"And the Roman Catholic?"

"Is filled to the street with its perspiring believers."

"And you really approve of the confessional?"

"My dear fellow, when a Protestant

woman does wrong she tells her husband; when a Roman Catholic does wrong she tells the priest. Women must tell somebody. In the first instance the complications are far more portentous."

Darrell turned and looked at him narrowly. "I think you are in need of the ministrations of a good woman," he said.

"I think so, too."

The words were spoken low, but with intention. They trudged on in silence under the stars, whose lights were dimmed by the glint of the city's lamps. The same thought crossed both their memories, to find voice in Darrell's ejaculation:

"I once had a wish——"

"I am too poor to marry; and then, I am not worthy."

The smaller man glanced up almost

timidly, with that admiration which welled within him but rarely found voice. "I had two affections. Was it an idle dream to want to unite them?"

"But you say the young lady is not fancy-free," said Thorne, a trifle impatiently.

"I have great faith in your powers."

"Pshaw! I can be fooled."

They both laughed.

"Thorne, what are you going to do with yourself?"

"Peg away at the law, make a competence, keep myself from dependence, if it lies in me. I see no further."

"Is it dependence, taking what is useless and turning it over to help humanity?"

"You know what I mean. I must make my own career."

"Do politics attract you?"

"Yes, in our country, where they have the piquancy of the unexpected and their rewards are so uncertain. I should hate the hack harness, such as it exists abroad."

"Then you don't believe in educating diplomats and cabinet ministers?"

"No. Life is the best and only teacher."

"Your point of view is at least interesting."

"My point of view is insignificant. Facts prove these things. Washington was not taught to be what he became, nor Lincoln, nor Hamilton, nor Franklin."

"Then," Darrell exclaimed, with fervour, "I hope to live to see you at the helm!"

Thorne looked down at him from his six feet of altitude and wondered why. Nevertheless, he was touched.

## III

LATER, alone in his room, smoking at his fireside—it was December and a biting wind frosted the pane—Thorne reflected with renewed amazement on his friend's words. They were so foreign to that reticence which was the keynote of Darrell's character. He felt it must, indeed, be a matter of the gravest importance which could cause him twice, and now after the lapse of years, to deviate from his usual reserve. The transgression was chimerical and quixotic; above all, unusual in an American. It appeared as if the abasement of his pride, even of his sister's, probably dearer than his own,

hardly weighed. It is true that the friends at college had tacitly agreed that between them the barriers of custom should be ignored; they had promised each other that mutual frankness without which mutual support remains impossible.

"Were I a Frenchman," said Thorne to himself, while he rolled a fresh cigarette between his thumb and index, "it wouldn't take me very long to accept Darrell's hint—is hint the word? methinks we have an invitation here—and persuade myself that I was desperately in love with the *sorella*, and she dying for me and not for her English suitor. He, by the way, seems a poor enough concern. The beauty of the Latins is that they deceive themselves and actually conjugate the verb *aimer* on the altar of Plutus. This is why they succeed with the ladies."

Then he fell to thinking of what success with the ladies may mean to men, and of the humiliation that had tortured him since he had hurriedly left the Riviera and taken the first steamer to New York. This episode, which a man more corrupt might have qualified as a success, had filled his soul with unspeakable disgust.

Breakfasting one morning at a hotel in Nice, within sight of the sea, in the company of some American acquaintances, a lady had detached herself from a neighbouring group and joined them at their small table. She knew his friends—a married pair and their young daughter—and chatted with them somewhat longer than was accounted for by the interest of topics broached. The least vain of men could hardly have failed to notice that her lingering was at his service and

that her great, haughty blue eyes held his own with a peculiar and meaning challenge. His companions named him, but he felt certain, as he rose and bowed, that she had not caught his name. Hers was well known. It was that of a woman of high rank and brilliant prestige in the world of England's most aristocratic life. Lady Eglinton's loveliness, extravagant expenditure and proud disdain were on every tongue, and the aureole of *femme à la mode* was hers beyond question or cavil, with the added solidity of noble lineage and patrician ancestry. She was a very great lady. It was with a curiosity veiled in respect that he met the first summons of that starlike glance. A half-hour afterward, as he prepared to go to his room to get himself ready for an afternoon's yachting, he was surprised to find the lady still loitering at

the foot of the main stairway. He paused to let her pass him, but she did not do so, and they went up together.

"Do stop and see my apartments," she said to him; "they are so sunny and nice. I keep them always like a garden, full of flowers and green palms. Do come in and cheer me a bit; I am quite alone."

She explained to him that her little boy and his nurse and her own maid had gone to Cannes to see his grandmamma. She herself unlocked the door, and they went in.

Her apartments were, in fact, very charming, filled, as she had said, with light and bloom. In a cage hanging in the sunshine two young monkeys chattered and tumbled. Lady Eglinton and Thorne stood and watched them a moment, laughing at their gambols.

They talked for a while of indifferent things—America, England, France, of country life in these places and elsewhere, of the last opera, the newest song, a tidbit of Russian Court scandal always to be discovered airing itself on the Riviera, a racy novel, and then—

"Are you married?" she asked, in her æolian voice.

"No."

"Are you free?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean do you care for anybody? Are you in love with any woman?"

"I was not an hour since," he answered, huskily. "But why do you ask?"

She did not tell him. Perhaps she could not. She did not herself know.

When they parted she asked him if he met her again the following day to

let her take the initiative—it seemed her province—as she might be subjected to peculiar difficulties and must crave his indulgence. She asked him to make no sign, send her no message; she would herself write him a note. That very night she told him she would be surrounded by spies—her family. In which last category Thorne guessed the husband she did not name. Dizzy with his delirium, he promised everything, anything.

Restless, distraught, the following afternoon, having received no word, he sauntered out on the promenade. The sea was bathed in all the glories of the setting sun, but the warmth of the noonday glow seemed to linger on its waters. The circling white gull, the flap of languid sails, the dip of oars, the smells of flowers, all seemed to fill sky, earth, and at-

mosphere with colour, melody and perfume.

Suddenly looking up, he saw Lady Eglinton's swaying form loom before him, advancing in all its elegance and strength. Her long, straight body was caught in a tight-fitting white cloth gown that clung to her as might the peplum to a winged siren of the Patissia. Her high, Roman profile seemed to cut the thin air with its fine pink outline, and the fruit of her red mouth and the dark blue of her glorious eyes dazzled while yet afar. She walked between two gentlemen, one a handsome, blond giant, with ruddy complexion and powerful arms, who for some unexplained reason he felt certain was Lord Eglinton, the other a different type, bronzed, poetic looking, somewhat Byronesque and bored. Toward him Lady Eglinton leaned in eager attention. Thorne was

preparing—the poor boy's heart was in his mouth—to raise his hat, when she fixed him with an insolent stare and passed him as she would have done a lackey, with cut direct.

There was not the quiver of an eyelid, the tremor of a tell-tale lip, the swift Masonic intimation of a recognition charged with its purport of hope or fear.

Nothing.

And again nothing. For she did not send him the line for which his outraged manhood waited twenty-four hours. He left Nice—rage in his soul. To-night he asked himself, for the thousandth time, What did it mean? Why have placed him in that vertiginous abyss, to leave him wallowing in its depths alone? Had it been a dark revenge against a faithless husband or lover, the whim of a cruel and betrayed

woman? Or had he pleased her idle fancy for an hour, been the toy of a woman's depraved caprice? She had whistled him to her side, then let him go. The infamous Empress Faustina, beckoning for an instant to a handsome slave boy of the market or lithe gladiator of the arena, could not have cast him from her with more derisive scorn.

All the bitter humiliation of the ignominious rôle that he had played lashed him as with scorpion tongues.

"My God!" he said aloud as he paced his room, "I'd put anything between me and that sort of deviltry. I'd suffer the martyrdom of a lifetime to keep my self-respect; I'd marry the Witch of Endor and be faithful to her, if I thought it would guard me against such tempting! What a craven she must have thought me all the time, and what a fool, if such women think

at all! Men are ashamed to own up to spiritual longing, are proud of animalism; yet how difficult the former, how easy the grip of the latter! To possess such a creature as that and not awaken in her one thrill of the soul, not leave in her one regret! And is this what men call a triumph of vanity? Mine was forever killed at Nice. Thus far, Lady Eglinton, I am your debtor."

In lighter moods he would laugh cynically. If one had a singular personality, independent thought, a hot temperament, one must do like Lady Eglinton—have the courage to follow one's originality! He sometimes wondered if he was higher or lower, more heroic or more vulgar, madder or saner than other men, for this entrapment and its escape. All of which proves that the wound, if not eternal, was deep enough.

We must not undervalue ephemeral suffering. Its results are sometimes lasting. Such proved the case with Hazard Thorne's adventure. "The nearer the monkey" of modern scientists, as applied to Lady Eglinton's and his own case, could only heighten its abasement. What belittles the responsibility of ignorance serves but to increase that of insight and education. Of what worth are the refinements if they teach not self-control? He and Lady Eglinton were without excuse.

On the afternoon after his talk with Darrell, Thorne got himself into his frock-coat, through the buttonhole of which he introduced the stem of a gardenia flower, as immaculate as certain resolves that he had made. He brushed his arm across his hat, picked

up a cane, and reaching the curbstone hailed a passing cab. He had himself driven to the hotel where Hamilton had told him he would find Miss Darrell.

She was visiting New York to be present at the marriage of a school friend. He found the halls busy with their rush of baggage, travellers, porters, clerks, women, the last overdressed, overblonde, overfat, overfed, loud, gesticulating, blocking doorways, bidding farewells in passages, standing at "lift" gratings—women by the dozen, by the hundred, hurrying or dallying, facile or severe. Among these he picked his way, somewhat stared at, for he belonged to a type at which women look twice. He was tall, he was elegant, he was extremely good-looking, and his gray eyes seemed to express that he was not quite indifferent to the glance of theirs. In fact, he was

one of those men who, if they take the trouble, can turn women to slaves or foes, but rarely to sisters or friends.

He was told by the hotel domestic who returned to pilot him that Mrs. Brayton was out, but that Miss Darrell would receive him. He had asked for Mrs. Brayton, who was Miss Darrell's aunt. He was conveyed to the gaunt private drawing-room, highly decorated with gilded plaster and hung with plush portières and gaudily framed mirrors.

Voices in an adjoining room warned him that Miss Darrell was not alone. A smothered laugh intimated that his advent caused commotion. He had, in fact, arrived at a moment most inopportune, unless, indeed, the Fates decree hours and seasons and web the nets of their hidden handicraft in a fashion no mortal man can unravel or elude.

After ten minutes of solitude the door was quickly opened and a young woman appeared on the threshold. She came forward shyly, as if not sure whether to give her hand to the visitor. Her embarrassment was evidenced by a shifting colour and an ill-disguised agitation that beat at the bosom of her tightly fitting cloth gown. She was of medium height, with irregular features, smooth black hair and a pair of frightened eyes.

"Is this Miss Darrell?" said Thorne, smiling, moving to meet her.

"No," said the girl, "my name is Shaw," and, as he remained standing before her, "Won't you sit down?"

They sat down, and an uncomfortable moment followed.

"Is it snowing?" said Miss Shaw.

"Not yet, but a storm seems impending; there is a chill."

It had penetrated between them. Miss Shaw got up and went over to the fire and brandished the poker, with feeble results.

"Let me help you." He took the tongs and propped up a fallen log.

"I am so sorry," she said, turning to him; "Mrs. Brayton, Miss Darrell's aunt, is out shopping, and she, Coralie —Miss Darrell, I mean—is just changing her frock. She begs you will pardon her for keeping you waiting; she will be with us directly."

A crash in the next room announced that agencies of preparation were at work. It painted consternation on Miss Shaw's transparent countenance. There was a sound as of the tray of a trunk thrown on the floor. Another crash, a rush of feet, and then a voice, not quite gently, cried out, "Don't be a *fool!*"

"Coral — Miss Darrell has a new maid," said Miss Shaw, apologetic, "and she can't find any of her clothes. That is what delays her now, but——"

"But?"

Thorne was amused and conscious of a vaguely awakened curiosity.

"But other things have interfered with her dressing. When you arrived she was in great trouble."

"I am sure I am very sorry to hear that," said Thorne, stiffly, scenting some fresh development of the British complication.

"It is simply dreadful," said Miss Shaw.

"Dear me!" said Thorne.

"She has received letters . . . But I am not at liberty to speak."

"Hamilton has told me something."

"How odd that you should never have met his sister! You are great

friends, are you not, you and Hamilton Darrell?"

Thorne thought it was odd, and also unlucky.

"You may say so. There are not many like her."

"I came this afternoon to mend my ill luck, to force destiny," he said, smiling.

Miss Shaw did not return his smile. She seemed to have little humour and no lightness. But she had a delightful simplicity.

"I adore her," she said.

Thorne murmured that Miss Darrell was fortunate, looking at her friend in the meantime with the indulgence of the man of the world at such enthusiasms.

"Her brother seems very fond of her."

"There is something splendid about

her," said Miss Shaw, a little defiantly, as if she remarked and resented Thorne's condescending attitude. "When one is happy," she went on, "one hates to see another miserable."

With this sentiment Thorne agreed.

"That man is perfect putty. I despise him!" This tragically.

"Hamilton tells me he is an invalid."

"That is possible. One would have to put up with it after one was married, but in one's fiancé. . . . However, I think it is broken."

"A sick lover is, in fact, less pardonable than a sick husband," said Thorne, somewhat sarcastically. "I recognise the woman's distinction."

"Ill or not, he is putty in the hands of his family. We can't understand such things over here."

"A woman had best marry a man

who has no near relatives," he said, but with no intention.

This time Miss Shaw laughed, under protest, yet laughed; her grave voice grew almost pretty.

"That is just what I am doing," she said, blushing. "I am glad you approve." She fidgeted in her chair and raised her handkerchief to her mouth.

"Ah! yours is the wedding, then?"

"Yes; next week. Who *told* you?"

"Darrell. He said his sister stayed for a marriage."

"We were at school together, in Farmington, Coralie and I. She is very clever—very witty, too. She was defending a young fellow only this morning who had been calumniated by a disagreeable old maid. The horrid thing said to her: 'Do men go to your head, Miss Darrell?' 'No, to

my feet,' she answered—wasn't that quick? We always have been intimate. She will be my bride's-maid. How I wish she would settle in New York! We both love it. I have to live here now, and I don't know a creature."

"She is a nice sort of girl," he thought, listening to Miss Shaw's prattle, "and her naïveté is charming. Miss Darrell's repartee certainly wasn't bad."

He saw Miss Shaw was judging him, and somehow, under the scrutiny of her searching eyes, he felt rather jejune himself, in spite of his pose of *homme du monde.*

Another bang and shuffle in the next room, the rustle of invisible petticoats, a muffled ejaculation, and the door was pushed open with a jerk. Miss Darrell entered.

## IV

THE "coltish" quality that Darrell credited to his sister in an indiscreet moment was vividly recalled to Thorne's memory in the shock of their first encounter, for a certain shock there was. They recognised and often spoke of it afterward. Miss Darrell's invasion of her drawing-room was not effected silently. Her personality was of that sort which fills spaces and overflows them. She seemed incommoded with the length of her limbs and her arms, and thus far Darrell's simile to a young horse was happy. Miss Darrell was very tall. Hers was already a commanding presence. "There is

something splendid about her" might also express an exuberance of temperament which found vent in restless movement and superabundant gesture, or hidden forces of character which time and opportunity alone can reveal. Miss Shaw had not explained. There was, in fact, in Miss Darrell's face something arresting and impressive, but it was not the lure or the seal of beauty. At this time she was not handsome, and Thorne, who had instinctive perceptions in such matters, also noticed that she was not becomingly dressed.

"I suppose you are Mr. Thorne," she said, extending her long fingers, "and I must introduce you officially to my friend, Miss Genevieve Shaw. She has no doubt been entertaining you while I tried to get myself together in the clutches of a stupid maid."

Thorne insincerely murmured that the results were satisfying.

She waved his compliment away with a brief "Thanks."

"Genevieve, hasn't my aunt come in?"

"No."

"Where can she be? I hope she hasn't forgotten we must dine early and go to the play with Hamilton tonight. Will Mr. Safford join us, dear?"

"Yes, he promised." Genevieve blushed again.

Miss Darrell leaned forward and pinched her cheek. "You dear little goose!" she said, and laughed.

Her laugh, although agreeable and ringing, was a trifle loud. Thorne did not like women to laugh loud. He thought it bad form. In spite of her laughter, Miss Darrell did not look very merry, and there were sus-

picious rims about her lids and traces on her cheeks which might indicate recent tears. She had donned a black satin gown too heavily trimmed with colored beads, and on her head was poised a hat topped with too many plumes. The costume was old for her years, and some costly jewels she wore at her throat seemed incongruous to the hour and unsuitable for a young girl. From under the hat there looked out two gray-blue eyes of singular honesty and courage. Her thick brown hair was carelessly dressed and blew about her wide forehead. Her nose was her best feature—strong, straight, well planted, the nostrils quivering with nervous sensibility. The mouth, large, mirthful when smiling, *triste* in repose, drooped at the corners, as if it might, in moments of ire or resentment, indulge in *la parole amère.* One

felt that the ire and the resentment would not be paltry. The complexion inclined to fairness, but was sallow and not very clear. The *tout ensemble* was certainly not pretty, but it was not uninteresting, for the contour of the head, forehead, and chin denoted intellectuality and strength. One felt that if Coralie Darrell might sometimes jar on one's taste she would never jar on one's heart. She interested Thorne, she did not charm him. Lady Eglinton had charmed him, and just now he was inclined to view a *charmeuse* as the son of Alcmene might have viewed his Lydian queen after he had escaped her wiles. His senses, always more insidious than fierce, were in that phase which follows violent reaction.

Miss Shaw left them by-and-bye, and he and Miss Darrell sat alone in

the gathering gloom together. They talked of Hamilton and their affection for that songless poet, as Thorne called him. He discriminated so wisely her brother's limitations and powers that she concluded it could be no ordinary mind that so gauged merits, motives and character. From Hamilton, Miss Darrell swung to her friend Genevieve—Genevieve Shaw. She had a jerky way with her of springing from subject to subject.

"She is related to the Shaws of Boston," she said, "but she has lived much abroad. She is to be married from her step-mother's house; she has no near relatives. Mrs. Shaw you must have heard of; she married again, a General Lawrence, who is, I think, one of your well-known men."

"He was a gallant soldier, is an orator, and has influence in politics."

"That's the one."

"And on whom does your friend bestow herself?" asked Thorne, somewhat bored.

"She is to be married very quietly next Wednesday to Tom Safford. Have you ever met him?"

Thorne had met the gentleman. "He belongs," he said, "to an old Putnam County family of high respectability; his father was twice in the Legislature; he is himself a rising lawyer."

"What is his social position in New York?" said Miss Darrell.

"He has none, I should say."

Miss Darrell's face fell. "I shouldn't like to marry a man unknown in his town," she said.

"A clever woman can help a man to scale the walls," said Thorne, smiling. "But really, I am not myself a

guide to fashion; I have been absent too much myself, and am comparatively a stranger in my own city. Safford is a jovial, pleasant fellow. I should think he would make a capital husband to your friend, who seems to be rather demure."

"She is very much in earnest," said Miss Darrell, "but she is excitable enough. I have sometimes thought her influence over me was unwholesome."

"Are you inclined to be too much in earnest?"

But to this question Miss Darrell vouchsafed no reply.

Outside, the twilight grew apace. Its hush seemed to fill the room. Even the noises of the thoroughfare dwindled with the lighting of the street lamps. The hurrying feet of the passers-by grew fainter and more

infrequent. The uptown rush was ebbing, the toilers were turning in for a half-hour before the evening meal and its fresh impetus of rest or recreation. Once or twice Miss Darrell's laugh rang out. Her hand played restively with her bracelets and her rings, her foot impatiently now and again beat the thickly carpeted floor. But on the whole she waxed quieter, and her conversation, from being disconnected and disjointed, became serious and forcible. She talked of Spain, where she had passed some months; of the Alhambra, Seville, Granada; of Spanish art, of which she longed so much to know more; of Spanish history and literature. Then she told one or two quaint anecdotes of persons met in the chance of travel, and with a colour, spirit, and raillery which gave Thorne no mean opinion of her

humorous intuitions. These sallies were followed by a discussion as to the relative worth of the French modern school of painters as compared with the old masters, in which Thorne was for antiquity and Miss Darrell sounded the note of progress. They parted after an agreeable half-hour or more.

As Thorne buttoned up his coat to face the raw evening, "Something could be made out of that girl," he said to himself. "She is not attractive, exactly—there is much that is crude, ungraceful, unfinished; she is too tall and thin, and her feet are too long, and she laughs too much and too loud; her clothes are too pronounced and she doesn't understand her own style, yet I could fancy it might be worth while to take such a creature in hand and make her over and shape her and tone her down, and

surprise one's self and others by creating quite a new young woman. There *is* something splendid about her—the little friend is right; it is the splendour of goodness—that girl is good, if there is virtue in earth or in heaven. What sweet eyes! How brave and how intelligent! That girl's got grit in her, and she's got sense, too, and fun."

It began to spit frozen rain; the drops whipped his face. He had no umbrella, but evaded them now and again with his hand before his eyes; he turned up his collar. After trudging a mile, as he ran up the steps of his club, "What if I tried?" he said, aloud.

"Ah, Thorne, did you speak to me?" asked an acquaintance who was coming down.

"Hallo, Vincent! Dining out, as usual? You are a professional."

"It is the most infernal nuisance, I can tell you. It's my last winter of it."

"Why do you go?"

"Why do we wear goloshes in wet weather, or comb our hair, or pay our dues at the club? It's all a part of the damned Philistinism of our blessed nineteenth century existence," the grumbler muttered as he climbed into a hansom.

"Always the same," thought Thorne, smiling.

Warren Vincent was a man of importance in clubs and salons. Thorne looked up to him with peculiar reverence. He was under the spell—a very strong one, in youth—of the other's *cui bono* philosophy. He mistook Vincent's lack of all enthusiasms for Talleyrand's "*Surtout, messieurs, pas de zêle.*" In this particular disciple the injunction bore fruit. Vin-

cent's immunity from all surprises, appreciations, admirations, amounted to genius. Before the glowing works of nature and the industries of man he remained passive. Lonely experiment, sublime meditation, pushing achievement, he sneered or laughed at, and somehow this contempt deluded others into believing that if Vincent only willed it he could move mountains and cast them into the sea, sway empires and destroy worlds. Warren Vincent was, in fact, a man of very mediocre abilities. An inherited fortune saved him from the mortification that failure to earn his living would have cast upon him in a country where this adroitness remains a test of merit. Superficial in culture, without artistic accomplishment, by a great deal of aplomb and impertinence he managed to awe the community into the belief

that his criticisms were valuable. Partly assumed and partly constitutional, his lack of warmth was half the result of a low vitality, yet his posturings impressed a coterie chiefly made up of small people.

The cynicism of his countenance had become a habit; it was a cynicism in which there lurked nothing sinister. His smile, to be sure, never rose to gaiety, but for all that it was not ill-natured. He looked like a man who regarded the world as extremely silly, but who intended to profit by its silliness; he was also capable of showing occasional kindness to the little dogs who crowded about him, wagging their tails at his approach. Too thin-blooded to be revengeful, he ignored enmity with a fine display of indifference. Absolutely unemotional, public stress or private trouble found him

calm, collected, and dry-pored. His nose was slightly retroussé, and he wore very high shirt collars, that gave his head an appearance of unusual erectness, of being propped up. His arched eyebrows lent superciliousness to his blank stare, while his long, faultlessly fitting frock-coat added several inches to his height. Not ill-favored, he was called handsome; ordinary in attainment and efficiency, he was considered clever. Clever he undoubtedly was, with that form of cleverness which knocks down and never constructs. A sway it undoubtedly possesses; but this is generally brief. In middle life such men sink to insignificance, in old age to oblivion. Eventually one wearies of the unproductive, of the hens that cackle and lay no eggs. From august they become ridiculous. Just now he was still young, and his ami-

able pessimisms and dissatisfactions were thought to be amusing. Society craves to be amused rather than instructed or benefited—besides which, he really had a taste for house decoration and some knowledge of rare bric-à-brac, which rendered him acceptable to the ladies.

"What if I tried!" To his Hudson River relatives Thorne knew Miss Darrell would appear "Western"—that vague term of reproach whose principal definition springs from variations played on the letter "r." How many pretty fancies and sweet love dreams has that "r" dispelled!

Genevieve Shaw remained to sleep at the hotel. These last few days of girlish communion were very precious to the friends whom congeniality of mind and mutual loneliness drew together in tender ties of confidence.

While Mrs. Brayton was disrobing her opulent charms in her apartments across the passage, the girls indulged in one of those nocturnal chats so dear to women, and in which the eccentricities and tergiversations of the other sex are so ruthlessly laid bare. Coralie Darrell sat on the edge of her bed; she was already in her nightdress. Over her shoulders she held her opera wrap, with its fluff of white fur about the throat; her naked feet, thrust into satin mules, dangled to the floor. Sunk in a low chair, facing her, Miss Shaw—still dressed—was loosening the coils of her heavy, braided hair. She was listening to her friend with a tremulous, almost painful attention.

"What did you think of him?" Coralie was saying.

"His eyes are fascinating."

"Pshaw! I mean of the man himself."

"Aren't eyes the windows through which we hide or peep?"

"I don't know; they can lie."

"Dear, why so distrustful?"

"You ask!"

Genevieve sighed. "I thought him very much of a gentleman, distinguished."

"I want your opinion, because the instant I saw that man I knew he was—my husband."

"Coralie!" Genevieve's eyes widened with their amazement.

"Hush! Yes, it is written. It will be best." And as her friend continued to gaze at her, speechless, transfixed, as if alarmed at some sign of impending madness, she said, "Don't stare at me so. I will explain; you must understand. I want your help. The

other thing is over, over forever; between it and me I wish to place an irremediable barrier. You know what happened to-day; you saw those letters; we had just read them when Mr. Thorne came in. I could overlook the cruelty of his mother's note, bidding me stop playing fast and loose with her son, and telling me how unwelcome I should be in her household. The other letter, the one from that girl he was engaged to and threw over for my sake, affected me more. But that, too, I could have ignored, with its insulting taunt that it was my money he coveted and that his heart was still her own. All could have been borne if I *believed.* But at last, at last, very late, my pride has awakened, my soul has revolted, my energy is broken. He has not stood by me as he should. I see it now. My peo-

ple are right. I am in the wrong. Hamilton was right. And, by-the-bye, it is I, not Arthur, that have been played with; it is I, not he, that have been crushed!"

"But—Mr. Thorne!" gasped Genevieve, clasping her hands across her knees.

"Mr. Thorne! He has come in time. They shall see what I am made of. Oh, I might have wished that Arthur Penfold should love me enough to claim me without a penny, but if I marry to please my brother, he can keep his word; he can give me the money. I'll take it; I'll take the fortune; I'll not put another man to any tests; I'll come well dowered." She spoke bitterly and drew her cloak closely about her breast. "Well — where was I?" There isn't anything more to say, is

there, Genevieve? I forget—where was I?"

"Mr. Thorne . . . and——"

"You said the word—he is a gentleman. That is what I must marry, a gentleman; that is what I liked in Arthur, his breeding." The tears fell from her wide-open eyes and trickled on her hands. "My life, Genevieve, has been, since mamma died, a hell. Aunt Elise, Mrs. Brayton, is kind, but so antagonistic to me I often hate her. When she crosses the floor, when she laughs or coughs, I want to wring her neck. And I am forced to be near her for months and months. These nervous idiosyncrasies are so hard to conquer. I blame myself, but what will you have? *C'est plus fort que moi.* Those whom God has set asunder let no man put together. Papa, you know, is entirely engrossed with his aims and

ends and speculations, filling our house with men a girl should never meet, lavishing luxuries on me one day and the next bidding me prepare for ruin—he has driven Hamilton from our home, and he will me. I loathe my life; I can not, I will not return and take it up again. Marriage is my only escape, my only excuse for leaving it. It suits papa well enough to have me there. Well, Mr. Thorne—Hamilton has talked of him to me. He is devoted to him. Do you know, the moment that man entered I felt—we know such things—that I affected him, that he was studying me, that he liked me, that I should have the opportunity of marrying him, that Hamilton would be pleased, that he was—my husband." The tears still rained upon her hands.

"How extraordinary! But are you sure it isn't pique?"

"I am sure of nothing. Don't let's analyze; my feelings won't bear it. Toward Arthur there is no pique; toward his family, yes, perhaps a little. One is human. A poor sufferer, for whom his people are too strong! Oh, a weakling, I'll admit it; but so dear, so dear!"

"What, still?" Genevieve spoke in a frightened whisper.

"Listen. Don't abuse him to me, I couldn't stand it—not yet, not yet. But one thing, Genevieve, I can promise you. If I go into this thing it will be loyally and pluckily. I am not base and I know the worth of a contract; I will keep mine. If I marry Hamilton's friend I will be a true wife to him."

"But you don't know the man."

"I shall know him."

"But he isn't even attentive to you

yet," said Genevieve, shaking her head a little impatiently.

"He will be attentive." Coralie dabbed a handkerchief across her face and laughed a laugh not entirely devoid of merriment.

"Ah, Coralie, what a creature you are! So inconsequent, so impulsive! Are you not afraid?"

"Ah, little Genevieve, the worst having happened to me, what should I fear? Who knows? perhaps life may still be full of promise. At any rate, it shall not conquer me. I am not weak."

"No, that you are not."

"Fancy any one living with papa who was! He has got to meet iron to strike his will and whims against, poor papa! He is fond of me, all the same, in his own queer way. And I am like him in many things, hopeful and buoy-

ant. We belong to the sanguines, but I have more concentration of purpose. I wanted your advice. I have lost faith in my own opinions, in my judgment of character. One doesn't want to make a second mistake. Did you like him? Do you think he will get on? I am ambitious now. Health is not enough this time."

"The responsibility you put on me is too tremendous—a man I have seen five minutes! He is certainly delightful in appearance and manner, and seems clever."

"That will do. Now, dearest, let us talk of yourself. Tell me about Tom—he fairly radiates—and all the details of *the* day. Aunt Elise says your veil is the most splendid she ever saw, and she knows—a contrast to me, who can't tell tatting from *point de Venise*."

## V

THE wooing was brief. Its outcome left the chief participants as breathless as the outside world. Ten days later Coralie said to Thorne, "Yes, I'll marry you, on one condition."

"And that is?" he asked, quickly.

"That you marry me to-morrow, without any announcement or engagement, in some church we shall pass in our promenade."

Here was a being evidently emancipated from common convention and yet of whose innocence one could have no shadow of a doubt. Thorne was delighted. The "wedding"—always a *corvée* to the male, and borne with as

much grace as a pet sheep carries its blue ribbons and jingling bells—thus summarily dispensed with, lent to his marriage an unusual savour. He was an odd mixture of geniality and ungregariousness, being the kind of man who, in certain moods, will walk a mile out of his path not to meet his best friend. He was not only delighted, he said so, and added something warmer that made her look up gratefully. Her wounded heart longed for kindness.

"She is enchanting," he said to Darrell; "so artless and so womanly."

"She is a good girl," said Hamilton, with a huskiness in his voice as he pressed Hazard's hand.

She had told Thorne frankly of her former love affair and of its ending. She concealed nothing. He saw in it a scratch, no more, that would heal

swiftly under the sunshine of a new tenderness. He meant to be tender. He felt within himself wells of unspent affection.

Darrell was elected to give her away, and her aunt and Tom Safford stood at her side. Her father, from a mining town in Texas, wired consent and blessings. On their return from their short wedding trip she was hurried up the Hudson and duly embraced and ratified by aunts, uncles and cousins. Before this final sanction Hamilton had handed her the deeds of a fine house in the Fifth Avenue and other deeds for other houses, and assigned to her securities in mining stocks, and bonds and mortgages and many things of which she knew but little, to the amount of a million dollars. This transfer—the rumour of which sped quickly—no

doubt mitigated the "Western" aroma that Thorne feared his kindred would detect in his young bride. They expressed themselves satisfied with his choice, commended his excellent taste, and took dear Coralie to their fond hearts. She, on her side, admired the forgotten gentlemen in their manorial dwellings, the serenity of their prosaic calm, the aristocratic seclusion of their environment. As the traveller is impressed by the sombrero and cloak of the hidalgo as "so ridiculously Spanish and picturesque, don't you know," so she found these people ravishingly quaint. She listened, not without a certain measure of respect, to their egotistic chatter as they dwelt on the legends of their former superiority to the vulgar herd that dominate New York to-day. She was not indifferent to the accident of birth. She reminded

them with spirit that if her father was a self-made man, her mother was of gentle blood.

"You must not be shocked, my dear Mrs. Thorne," she said to the aunt who had sent Hazard to Harvard, "if I am not like other girls. Mamma died when I was thirteen, and I have been my own mistress and far too independent ever since. I long for guidance."

"I like her," said this lady afterward to her lord; "she needs toning down, I admit, but she is perfectly refined in everything, and I find her full of character and intelligence. She is clever, and mark my words, Alfred, by-and-bye she will be a handsome woman; that sort needs maturity."

"She will have to make haste, then; she's hardly up to Hazard in looks now."

Alfred Thorne could not escape the conviction that his nephew conferred an honour on Miss Darrell in giving her his hand.

"He's immensely lucky, and the sooner you tell him so the better," retorted his wife.

"Hem . . . hem!"

"Why, they'd have jumped at her abroad, an heiress——"

"The Thornes, my dear, never jumped at anything. You know our motto, 'I wait.'"

"I tell you they have waited until the grass has grown up to their ears. I am glad we have no children. If Lester"—Lester was Hazard's other uncle—"and Amanda sit still much longer they can whistle for husbands for their girls till they're hoarse, and not get half a one. Husbands nowadays aren't going to spring down girls'

throats. Your nieces should have been properly presented. Eleanora is getting quite old-looking."

"Eleanora is a mighty pretty young woman," said her uncle, testily.

"There are signs of age women can conceal from men, but never from one another. But I am thought peculiar," went on Mrs. Alfred. "Well, Hazard, at any rate, who was my boy, has shown some gumption. I should like them to take some sort of a position. It is little enough we can do to help his wife in the city."

"Position! What! with Mrs. Clyde and Mrs. Larremore and Mount Cuthbert, whose father was a drayman, leaders of the dance! What a distinction! They are well out of it."

"I am not talking about distinction. The Darrell tree is new enough, but I

have generally noticed that people who were too good to marry the new rich ended by marrying the new poor. They are young and want a little fun; who's to give it to them? Our old-fogy cousins in Bond Street, or Rebecca Varick at her whist parties on Second Avenue, or the Van der Voorts in their back parlour, with their chicken-salad Sunday teas? My dear Alfred, you're moss-grown. We are antiquities—respectable, but obsolete. Let the birdlings build their nest on a new bough; ours is toppling and rotten at the root, and"—as Mr. Thorne raised a white hand in protest, standing with his back to the fire, in his comfortable dressing-gown and flowered waistcoat—"I shall advise Coralie to be catholic—to extend her lists, to widen her influence; it will be better for Hazard's profession. Look at that clock, my dear," she

pointed to an ancient timepiece; "an inveterate liar, an hour and a half behind time; there we are! It doesn't matter here, where there is nothing to do, but in the world one must keep up to the minutes."

She walked to the window and looked out, leaving her husband to digest her words. An immense silence hung over the landscape, gray, dense, and sad under its vapour of snow. The river, frozen here and there in patches, frowned between the ice-floes in deep pools of hidden water; the trees that concealed the banks, under which the hated railroad sped, loomed bare and tall against the leaden sky. Nature's eternal repetitions were the chief breaks in the monotony of existence. Sometimes Mrs. Thorne had found them pale. She turned back to the luxurious warmth and colour of the

room with a slight shiver and sigh. "Let the birdlings build their nest," she repeated under her breath, but her husband did not heed her. It was the hour of his nap, when he rested from doing nothing. He was already stretched at length on his well-worn sofa and snoring lustily. She stopped, and with the force of habit threw a shawl across his feet, then stood and looked down for a moment at his once finely cut and handsome features, dulled and thickened by cramped aims and small achievement, and so looking, sighed again.

The Hazard Thornes built their nest in the big house that Darrell gave his sister as a portion of her dower.

"I hear," said Mr. Atherton to Warren Vincent, "that Hazard Thorne

has struck oil—or a Western heiress —and moved into a palace."

"Car?"

Atherton laughed. "The Pullman carriages are at least easy and comfortable."

"When one is not writhing at their ornamentations. They affect my liver. Thorne's drawing-room has all the plush indecencies and barbarous equivocations of the drawing-room palace car at its worst."

"They will learn."

"Perhaps. I doubt it. Madame has not a vestige of what the French women call the art of installation."

"American women are wonderful —she will learn," repeated Atherton. "I hear she is clever."

"What good will that do her?"

"It will keep her going. Beauty gives the start, but brains keep up

the pace. A beautiful, stupid woman is done for at twenty-five; a fairly pretty and clever one still reigns at forty."

"That depends."

"Exactly. It depends on her use of her cleverness. I mean the woman who employs her wit to some purpose, who makes the most of herself, her attractions and her opportunities. The silly ones go to pieces; the clever ones know how to harbour their forces, retain their physical loveliness, enhance and make it valuable, and bend chance to will. They understand that the social career, like any other, must have a meaning; that a campaign is not a succession of disconnected manœuvres, wild and inconsequent, but that to every move there must be concerted plan and purpose, else it's doomed to final failure. Occasional pyrotechnics

are not sufficient. There must be *suite dans les idées.*"

"Get out a manual, Atherton, and I'll invest in a copy for Mrs. Thorne," said Vincent, with that dry laugh which somehow even the well-seasoned Atherton found disagreeable, yet did not know exactly how to resent. "She'll need it."

Atherton lighted his cigar and turned on his heel with a sense that his homily had been ill-timed, overheated and a trifle prolix. It was this faculty of belittling others which made of Warren Vincent a power in his set. A small power in a small set, yet Dumas *fils* tells us "a little success proves a great talent."

Such as it was, the nest was builded, moved into and became a home. Our young married people sat down in it to make each other's acquaintance.

There seemed little danger of interruption; they found themselves practically alone.

Genevieve Shaw, now Mrs. Safford, lived very near, in one of the numerous numbered streets that cross the avenues. Darrell bought himself a house next door. Apertures in the wall of the different stories made the houses one. This connection might be useful in case of entertainment. He usually ate with them. Just now, entertainments did not seem expedient, as there was nobody to entertain. They had a good cook, and bachelors were sometimes invited to dine. Among them, Warren Vincent was a frequent guest. He liked the admiration he inspired in his host and the secret hostility he guessed in his hostess. It piqued his vanity. Mrs. Safford and her husband often joined

them, and of course there were a few other women, some married couples, an occasional girl. These belonged to no particular coterie, but were culled from a variety of sources—sometimes were travellers from other cities, country relatives, Western potentates. This incongruous *mélange* was a source of constant amusement to Vincent, who could trone among them to his complete satisfaction, striking terror to their simple hearts. His visits were not without profit to young Mrs. Thorne. Much as he annoyed her, she had to admit his knowledge in matters of furnishing and bric-à-brac.

"Isn't that a dear little cabinet?" she once said to him, exhibiting the latest purchase that adorned her graceless, stiff boudoir. She sat here of an afternoon because her brother

and her husband told her she ought to enjoy it.

"Ah!" said Warren, adjusting his monocle, "modern."

"It didn't pose for an antique," she answered, vexed at being vexed. She had seen the thing in a shop window and did not like to acknowledge she had gone in and paid the price and ordered it sent home without a query.

"I am not so sure," said Vincent; "the imitation is admirable, but it's imitation. What did they make you pay?"

She named the sum.

"I thought as much. They have passed it off for the real thing; they have cheated you badly."

Mrs. Thorne hung her head.

He went on, not unkindly, and gave her a lesson on this particular cabinet which, with many other lessons she

was learning, she never forgot. Her memory was retentive.

Another time he was a less good genius; in fact, she thought him an evil influence in her husband's path, but bore with him, as brides do with their husbands' friends, resignedly, in the desire to be dutiful. Hazard liked him, and she would not banish a solace from his evening after a busy day. For he worked hard and his practice grew apace. On this one occasion, however, she felt that Vincent's ice-cold judgment did her wrong. They had been to a ball. An occasional ball, like an occasional horseback ride, leaves pain in the joints. This particular ball was not, in young Mrs. Thorne's opinion, a happy venture. Rather indifferent as to her clothes, she had been accustomed to allow her aunt to dress her, with more or less,

generally less, felicity. Now, unused to the perfidy of New York mantua-makers, she neglected to order her gown in time. It came home, casually, the night of the dance. This *soirée* was a subscription one, but *à la mode.* The frock, a light green tulle with ivy leaves and silver, pretty enough on some girlish, plump blonde, was eminently unsuitable and unbecoming to Mrs. Thorne's tall tenuity. It was found to be a trifle short and somewhat too *décolletée.* There was no time for alteration. She decided she would not dance and that a convenient fan could be held up before her bosom. The disadvantages were not as marked, once in the ball-room, as before she left the gaping curiosity of her own maids, for everybody else seemed very much uncovered, and she passed unnoticed. As nobody asked

her to dance, she sat most of the evening. Her husband did not like her gown, and told her so. He regretted her first appearance should not be more propitiously accomplished, and was cross and even quite angry with—the dressmaker. This did not raise his wife's spirits. He himself had a poor time of it. He was mortified to find himself so much of a stranger in his own city; he also noticed that the women had ceased to look at him. This made him smile and assure himself that he did not care. He was very glad he did not care. He repeated this to himself several times during the evening. But it is not of this ball we would speak. Early the next day he was surprised, when he left the breakfast table, to find Coralie fully equipped for a walk, standing in the hall. She kept the French custom of coffee in her bed-

room, and he rarely saw her, except for a word of greeting at her door, until he returned from his office in the afternoon.

"Why! You up at this hour?"

"I must get that party out of my bones," she said, laughing, "and out of my head. I want to walk it off before my singing lesson."

"Well, I must be off. I have got a lot of important papers to look over which I brought up last night and did not even open. The men who dined here didn't give me the time to get at them, between dinner and the party. By the way, dear, scold that dressmaker; she did not half do you justice. I like you better in white. Why don't you wear white? I think black velvet would suit you, with your pearls."

As he spoke he fumbled for the

documents, found them on the hall table, put them in his ulster pocket, and in a moment was in his hansom cab. She heard him throw the driver the address of a neighbouring hotel where he sometimes stopped to send early telegrams. As he drove off she saw that two or three loose sheets had detached themselves from his package and fluttered to the sidewalk. She turned to the butler, who blocked the vestibule, with the instinct to bid him follow his master, but the man's bare head, slippers, and helpless stupidity struck her as necessarily delaying. Before she formulated her command she had herself taken the field, or rather, the street. She grabbed the papers, and rushed down the slushy pavement in hot pursuit of her husband's cab. It turned the corner just ahead of her. The novelty of the exercise, the uncer-

tainty of the chase, intoxicated her and seemed to give her wings. On she flew, slipping, tripping, but righting herself, her hat shifting a little toward one ear, one braid of her hair detaching itself at her *nuque*, heedless of appearance, careless of comment, speeding after the hansom, which obstacles of the thoroughfare kept just within her sight. At last — the distance shortened. She caught up with it as her husband sprang to the curb.

She could not speak at first, but held out the lost papers, gradually recovering her breath. "I thought you—would want them," she panted. "You said you—they were important . . ."

"And you ran through the mud after me all the way to bring them!" he said, looking at her with a sudden great reverence surging within him. He took her outstretched fingers in his

own. "My dear, that was a lovely impulse."

She was flushed and dishevelled, but it gave her childish pleasure to have won the race, and she was prouder of the exploit than of its motive. "I knew I could do it!" she cried; "I have such long legs. They did me service this time."

"It was simply sweet," he went on, looking into her eyes, "and I wish I could kiss you, but I will . . . your hand." As he spoke he stooped and pressed his lips an instant on Coralie's wrist, and Coralie, poor child, felt happy for the first time since her marriage. A laugh startled them. Warren Vincent came out of the hotel.

Coralie's action was one of those of which a man is proud or ashamed, according to his power of discernment. What was highest in Thorne's nature

was deeply touched. It was a trivial thing, no doubt, but one of those marks of devotion and unselfishness which subtle minds know how to value. "It was an exquisite thing to do," he thought.

Vincent took off his hat and stood beside them. Something in his aspect dampened them both. By mutual consent they dropped each other's hands and stepped quickly apart.

"You are out early, Mrs. Thorne," he said, "for a lady I saw at two o'clock at Delmonico's. I am sure all the other women who were there are fast asleep. New York great ladies are so indolent."

As he spoke in his quiet voice she became suddenly conscious that her skirt was bedraggled, her hat awry, her hair pendent, her boots not improved by the run through the blackening mud.

A defiant feeling possessed her that she needed no defence for what Thorne had praised.

"I ran after Hazard's cab to give him some letters he had forgotten," she said, boldly.

"I was at the *coiffeur's* window and saw your arrival," said Vincent, with his cold smile. "I was greatly interested."

"Charmed that I furnished you entertainment," she said, haughtily. "Good-bye, Hazard," and she left them.

Thorne moved as if to follow her, but somehow the charm was broken. Vincent passed his arm through his.

"Come, walk down; it will do you good."

"Very well"—he dismissed his cab —"I will, as far as Tenth Street. Wait while I wire a couple of messages."

As they walked along Vincent said: "Your wife ought to go out more."

"We are strangers."

"Nonsense! you, a Thorne."

"An unknown Thorne, and you know it." He felt a vague anger rising in his heart against his companion—he hardly knew why.

"What's the matter?"

"We are not successes."

"My dear fellow, it's your own fault. You ought to coach her."

"Look here, Vincent; what do you mean by that?"

"I mean, how can she be a success and do this—er—sort of thing?"

"I don't understand you."

"Why, you should tell her that what did very well for—Ogonia—or what was the name of the place?—won't go down here. If she wants to be a success she's got to stop running after her

hubby, and you'll have to stop abetting it. Besides, your tall women should not agitate themselves. Their style is repose."

"If you don't want to get your nose pulled you had better stop!" said Thorne, glaring at him. "I don't discuss Mrs. Thorne with you. One more word on your part will be one too many."

"My dear boy, pray, pardon me; I was entirely in jest, as I thought you were. Here is Tenth Street, and I'll leave you and hail this cab. Here, fellow, take me to Broad Street. Good-bye; I meant no offence," and he drove off.

Thorne's exaltation had fallen. It was for this he could not forgive Vincent. It is cruel to be pulled down from heights. "The devil take his impudence!" he said to himself. But try

as he would, he could not reclimb to the elevation from which he had, for a moment, looked into his young wife's soul.

## VI

MRS. HEATHCOTE, who was the mistress of a sumptuous town house, a luxurious villa at Newport, and a charming country place on Long Island, was driving up Fifth Avenue. Just because she possessed all these things and the finest and smartest of equipages, as well as many wonderful gowns, she chose to run about half the day in a cloth dress and toque, and to be driving now with her husband in the most dilapidated and rickety of cabs.

When a moment's blockade brought their humble curricle to a standstill under the wheels, as it were, of a resplendent victoria bright with gilded

harness and highly groomed horses, "Who in the world are your friends in those wild hats?" she said to her husband.

Colonel Heathcote, glancing out to see what mishap impeded progress, was bowing to two ladies. "I was presented to those two women at the last 'Patriarch,' just as I was escaping the supper. If you hadn't had a headache and stopped at home, you'd have been offered up, too."

"Fancy! Were they there? How mixed those subscription affairs are getting!"

"Do you see the one on this side?"

"She's got a nice face; she looks clever and amusing, in spite of her awful get-up."

"Well, that is Hazard Thorne's young wife, and you talk of 'mixed!' Why, when my father was a boy, Mrs.

Harry Thorne was the leader of everything. It was sufficient she should show at a party to make it the fashion, while the Thorne boys were the idols of the young nobs, and their models."

"Yes, of course. Mamma was full of those traditions of the Hazards and Thornes, but this—girl?"

"The daughter of John Y. Darrell."

"What, the big bug out West?"

"The same."

"She looks it."

"Nonsense!"

"Do you know, Reginald, I *like* her. She would be pretty if . . ."

The victoria trembled and freed itself; the shambling cab fell into line behind it.

"And the other one?"

"The other one is Tom Safford's wife. I know him very well down town; a good fellow."

"A gentleman?"

"Yes, of course."

"I never heard of him."

"They are not New Yorkers."

"What a circus of strangers is invading us!"

Mrs. Safford was saying to her friend, "There's that Colonel Heathcote Mr. Vincent introduced to us."

"Which way? Ah, yes! Can that be his wife? I have heard so much of her I was dying to see her. What a lovely woman, and so simple; and look at their turnout!" Both laughed. The simplicity of elegant women was still a surprise to Coralie. In her own city, position was defined by splendour. "That would delight Joseph Turtle."

"Is he still ranting against luxury?"

"Oh, yes; I have ceased to pay attention. It would seem that extremes

meet—Joseph and Mrs. Heathcote exploiting the same ideas!"

"She has a charming face; she must be superb in the evening."

"I have always heard her toilettes raved over. To-day she is dressed like a maid."

"She doesn't look like one."

"No. More like a goddess incog., stooping to earth for a moment's distraction from the tedium of Olympus. When she looked at me I felt like an over-bedecked Jewess."

"Those women—it doesn't matter what they wear or do—always seem to be—right," sighed Genevieve.

"And we—wrong," said Coralie, laughing heartily.

She laughed again still more gaily with her husband and Darrell at the dinner hour. "Mr. Vincent was so scandalized at my matutinal scramble

through the streets after Hazard!" she said to her brother, as she sipped her *consommé.*

Darrell gave out his grave smile. He was superlatively happy, warming himself in the rays of what he called his two affections. He was proud of his handiwork and as pleased with his match-making as any Gallic dowager who has unearthed two good *partis* and thrown them into each other's arms. Manlike, he penetrated little into the undercurrent whose surfaces appeared so calm. "I warned Thorne once you were a colt, but it's time you were put into traces."

"You should have seen his nose," went on Coralie, "two inches longer than usual. He considers me hopeless."

"Vincent can make himself deucedly disagreeable when he chooses," said Thorne, in whom the unpleasant en-

counter with the gentleman in question still rankled.

"He is a sybarite," said Darrell. "We have a few such in this country. I, for one, am willing they should fill their niche; they wish to see that we fill ours."

"That is just it," said Thorne; "they always want to interfere, to give lessons."

"Vincent is rather a silent man, is he not?" said Darrell.

"His silences are terrible," said Coralie. "I have learned to dread them more than his utterances; they are less direct, but invariably mean more profound disapproval."

Thorne felt annoyed that she should assume this attitude of needing a mentor. "Why don't you snub him?"

She opened wide pupils. "Why don't you?"

"I do."

Then, being a woman, she said, as if addressing the air:

"Oh, I thought he was *persona grata.* I'm sure I don't want him here. I detest him!"

Something in her tone irritated Thorne. He frowned.

"He is certainly less odious than your friend Turtle. He is at least a——"

"Now, Hazard," she said, "don't say gentleman, for Joseph is that—isn't he, Hamilton?"

"Yes, I think he is," said her brother, "a gentleman in his innocence."

"He is an infernal bore, at any rate," said Mr. Thorne.

"Poor dear! He isn't very intelligent, but he is reverent."

"Reverent?" said Darrell.

"Yes. He believed my cabinet was an antique, and worshipped it as such, whereas Mr. Vincent knocked the bottom right out of it and of all my illusions; said I had been robbed, if not murdered."

Thorne always liked her fun, and applauded it now by a swift dissipation of his moment's ill-humour. "Well, if you can bear with that man, I'm willing; you are more patient than I am."

"Oh, my dear, I'm accustomed to being bored; I have learned patience. If you only had seen some of papa's friends, eh, Hamilton? Mr. Sperry, for instance, or Canova. We used to call one of our visitors Canova because he once asked me if a copy of Michael Angelo's 'David' was not 'sculped'—yes, that is the way he called it—by the same man who did the 'Cupid and Psyche' in our hall. 'He was a kind of

an all-round man, now wasn't he?' he asked. Hamilton, don't look so—I am telling the truth."

She was a good mimic, and illustrated her spirited stories with amusing imitations.

Joseph Turtle was a slab-sided, long-haired, smooth-faced individual whom the chance of affairs carried back and forth like a leaf in a storm between Ogonia—where Mr. Darrell *père* had his country estates—and New York. He was a native of the former place, a son of the village physician. He had played with the Darrell children when a child, and always remained with them on terms of friendly familiarity. He called Mrs. Thorne Coralie, with robust pressure on the *al*, and Darrell, "Ham." Mrs. Thorne was one of those honest women who dislike to discard old friends—the genus is almost extinct.

She welcomed him, therefore, in her New York home, but she did not make a tragic virtue of this hospitality. She did not look upon it as a work of supererogation. "I must know whom the Ogonia people marry, and what they die of," she said to her husband. "Leave me my Turtle. He is my last link with the old days. Papa never writes, he telegraphs, and then only three words." Perhaps in this new existence, where much that she did and said seemed to strike discord, she was grateful for the presence of one in whose eyes she knew that she could not err. For, the petted and spoiled darling of her father's house and of her warm-hearted neighbours, she was unused to criticism. Now and then, when she remembered her girlhood, her eyes filmed and her voice faltered, although she had left Ogonia without regret.

But Mr. Thorne did not fancy Turtle. He was, in fact, a difficult person to fancy.

"He is an acquired taste," Coralie used to say. "Wait until you've been regaled on him, as I have, for twenty years, and you'll become a victim to the habit."

It was not about Turtle, however, but about Warren Vincent that they had their first serious dissension. And here once more Thorne's equanimity was disturbed at a certain clashing between his own and his wife's judgment.

Coralie had a way of scribbling down impressions, keeping a species of record, less of facts than of the people whom she met, their peculiarities and personal characteristics. As she never showed these to her husband, he could not guess their genius. He would have recognised it, for he did not underrate

her powers. She, on the contrary, sometimes impatient of his conservative views of conduct and modes of thought, was perhaps inclined to depreciate his.

One day, looking over some pages she had written, they seemed to her so well done that she felt them worthy of publication. Always impulsive, she tore them from her journal, and sent them by mail, unsigned and thinly veiled with dexterous changes of names and seasons, to the Ogonia Sentinel. The bit was only a description of a New York drawing-room in which a type of person resembling Warren Vincent was made to play the principal part. His appearance, manner, gestures, methods of speech, were rendered with absolute fidelity, and at the same time whipped with mordant irony. Ogonia was so insignificant a town that, had the article been dull, it would have

gone no farther; but it was brilliant, and distinctly a hit. The editor was no fool. He ran it through his sheet, then sent it cityward. It was copied from paper to paper, blazed through the country, and reached New York—at last. "From the Ogonia Sentinel" was more betraying than would have been the open signature, Coralie Darrell Thorne. It was read in the clubs and commented upon. Vincent read it, and, what was more unfortunate, Thorne. He recognised his wife's hand instantly. It is not too much to say that he was very angry. Vincent was their frequent guest, was a man of dignified position, of assured standing, accepted on the footing of friendship. He deemed the offence heinous and ineffaceable. He came home, with the paper into which his wife's squib was transcribed in his pocket, burning with indignation.

He rebuked her for her indiscretion somewhat hotly. She retorted that she could not know it would go farther than the limits of her province, and that, after all, types were types endlessly repeated. They belonged to authors—were public property. Would Vincent read it? So much the better. If her husband desired it, she would read it aloud to him at his next visit. She said this and many other foolish things, and tossed her head as only young women do who are profoundly humiliated.

Later Genevieve was the recipient of her confidence. Ah, how often she had wept on her friend's shoulder! For under Coralie's laughter there were tears. Never had she been less happy than in the first years of her married life. Her soul was desperately sad. Genevieve Safford alone knew its se-

cret struggles. No time of her brief youth was so unhappy to her as these first months, for, only a few weeks after his dismissal and her marriage, her English lover did the worst thing he could have done for Hazard Thorne. He died. Dying, he was very cruel; he left a letter for her. In it he blamed her heartlessness, upbraided her faithlessness, told her she had dealt the death thrust; that he had loved her; that she should have waited. Was he honest? Perhaps. At any rate, her heart was wrung, and it was only through constant abnegation and self-immolation that she could bring herself to fill the rôle she had imposed on herself. She cursed the folly that had driven her into such hasty ties, and was as miserable as can be a girl not much past twenty who thinks that she has killed the man who loved her. Gene-

vieve, who was the worst adviser possible, gave her a sympathy at once inexperienced and a trifle ponderous. She fanned her remorse.

Is it a wonder, then, that Coralie was no "success?" She grew, indeed, pallid and thin.

It is very well for fables and proverbs to insist that the most ineffectual creature that is alive is of more importance than a dead lion. A dead lover is a dangerous rival to a living husband in an imagination of twenty-three. After she had sobbed out her quarrel with her husband, baptizing Mrs. Safford's velvet cape and broidered bodice with her tears, she felt inclined to believe that Arthur Penfold had every virtue and Hazard Thorne but a scant appanage. "He doesn't understand me in the least," she cried, "and yet—and yet, if he only knew how hard I have

tried to please him, through all—through all!"

"He does know, he does see, dearest," cooed Genevieve, kissing her hair; "but you are an impulsive creature and he is a man of the world, and so . . ."

"Oh, I hate their world! Perhaps I shall not be in it long."

Genevieve drew her to a warm embrace. "Hush, darling, what should I do?" She knew Coralie spoke of an impending hour when life and death throw dice for victory.

"Ah, I should have died and followed Arthur long ago if it hadn't been for you, dear Genevieve."

"Why, my darling, you are unjust to your husband; he loves you, he——"

"Does he? He won't give up that horrid man to please me, and now——"

"A man! Why, just think if it were a woman!" whispered Genevieve.

"Oh, he never looks at women; there's nothing like that."

"Well, that is a good deal."

"Fancy! Why, Genevieve, you are getting cynical and suspicious. No, he is quite absorbed in his career, in spite of his dilettante, *dolce far niente* manner."

"A very attractive manner."

"Yes, he is attractive, and I have ambitions for him."

"And for yourself?"

"And for myself. Not puerile ambitions; mine are colossal."

"To what do you aspire?" said Genevieve, smiling.

"It is still inchoate, but I should not like obscurity." Then, after a moment, "It is well he doesn't care about other women; I am jealous."

"What! really?"

"Yes."

"Were you jealous of Arthur Penfold?"

"Yes."

"I never imagined such a thing of you."

"Oh, my dear, you don't know me yet."

"I think you were wrong to show up your husband's friend."

"I did not reflect."

"And you know he never did like Mr. Turtle," said Genevieve, who had no humour, shaking her head.

"Joseph is so forlorn," said Coralie, laughing through her tears, "so lonely and so devoted to me, the one chain with my past. How can I throw him over? I know his name is funny and he is not very swell, but it would just break his heart if I were nasty to him."

"But isn't it more important to suit your husband?" said Genevieve, with astuteness, yet secretly enjoying, as timid women do, the rashness of another's speech.

"I am not a weakling, Genevieve," said Coralie, sitting up again and straightening out her disarray; "I am not what my brother Hamilton calls 'a scatterer.' I have moved heaven and earth to conceal what I have suffered from my husband, and he thinks that Penfold's death was a mere prick to memory, no more. I am devoted to his interests. I shall be so to his child's. Why, I am studying law to keep up with him, and the best paper he wrote for his last case I prepared for him. Don't think me ungrateful for much that I appreciate, but I was born to be unhappy."

Is this true of some of us? Are

there beings, indeed, as the astrologists insist, doomed from their birth to suffer, on whom Saturn or the moon has cast a ray of gloom and danger? Coralie nestled like a bird to her friend's arm.

"I have been faithless, and am punished! I am envious of your joy, dear," she went on, after a moment's silence. "My marriage is not congenial, like yours, but I did not deserve it."

"Ah, you poison mine when you say that," cried Genevieve. "Such words seem ominous of evil." She had not believed in the Englishman, but felt her impotence before the pathetic silence of the dead, which none can cope with. Her dark eyes gleamed with terror, and she caught the young woman to her heart.

"Perhaps my little one will bring

me cheer," said Coralie, more lightly. "Don't fret about me, dear; you will make yourself ill. You are quite white."

"I do fret. I am alone so much. Tom is so occupied. You are all of my day when he is absent."

"My daughter shall be Genevieve—I know it is a girl. I shall have my sorrow—bring a woman child into the world."

His wife's pallor, languor, restlessness, Thorne attributed to her condition, as was natural. But notwithstanding dark forebodings, Mrs. Thorne's ordeal was as easy as is the Indian woman's who stops under a tree to bring her baby into life and picks it up and trudges on her way. And it was a rosy little morsel of flesh, and lusty and dimpled and merry. Genevieve, or Viva, as she was nicknamed, indeed

filled the house with the *bravura* of her sorceries.

Three years later their son was born. They named him Hamilton Darrell.

## VII

"OUR house is hideous!" Thorne said to Vincent, when they sat smoking alone late one evening in the library. "What the devil's the matter with it?"

In the present evolution of sex, when there is a perceptible *rapprochement* in aims, pursuits and accoutrements, it has possibly escaped casual observers that just as women grow more masculine, men have a tendency to—femalize. The helpless male of fifty years ago, who couldn't get his dinner well cooked or his rooms properly heated, or his clothes brushed, or his æsthetic propensities developed without the aid of woman, is fast disappear-

ing. Men's clubs, run by men, supplied by men, valeted by men, are proverbially better kept than private establishments.

It is now possible, nay, probable, that the master's apartments will be quite as dainty and well ordered as my lady's; while he is fidgety about his bed-hangings, crotchety about his picture frames, and devotes much time and expenditure to the setting of his chimney-piece, the period of his clocks and the authenticity of his majolica. The private homes of modern bachelors of fortune are museums, labyrinthian and intricate receptacles for objects of the highest artistic excellence, whose lack of utility is counterbalanced by their grace. They are, generally, also cosy nests of comfort, peculiarly adapted to the pretty fencing of love and gallantry. A woman finds to-day in her

lover or her husband not a defenceless wight played upon by tradesmen, hungry, cold, shelterless and shabby unless ministered to by her succouring care, but a teacher, critic and coadjutor. In the matter of frescoes, dadoes, dinner decorations, and even of dresses, bonnets and the trinkets that go to make up the up-to-date *élégante*, he knows as much as she.

While not belonging quite to the new era, Thorne, always fastidious in his dress, was possessed of sufficient knowledge to be made uncomfortable by all forms of ugliness. He knew just enough to be dissatisfied with his installation, yet not enough to remedy its glaring insufficiency. Vincent's silence proved to him that he was not alone in his opinion.

"What the devil's the matter with it?"

Vincent emitted a pale ring of smoke from between his lips and pulled up his high shirt-collar with a jerk.

"There's too much upholstery," he said, laconically. "It's too plushy and buttoned in, and over-carpeted and over-chandeliered, and that sort of thing. Thank God, light is coming to us; it'll be time enough when this Renaissance is settled, has shaken down on us, to do it all over. The contents of this room, for instance, with its wainscotting and huge mantel, are out of all proportion to its size. These things would have looked well at Chambord or Chatsworth; they are absurd in these narrow quarters."

"I'll be hanged if I let my wife give parties until we have done it over. Poor girl! she's as disappointed with the results as I am."

Vincent was again silent. He had

not forgotten a certain muddy morning. Perhaps there were matters of more recent date he did not forget. If, however, he bore his friend's wife any grudge for her literary pasquinade, he was too Machiavellian to set the fool's cap on his own head. He had met the article—the Thornes began to doubt if he had read it—with an inscrutable indifference. Thorne felt grateful, Mrs. Thorne puzzled. To her ardent and frank nature, open resentment would have been more comprehensible. Sweetly kind-hearted, she had deeply regretted her action, regretted it in sackcloth and ashes, and was ready to offer any amends to one she might have hurt. How could she imagine it would ever be copied! Equally unexplainable to her was the chilling but exquisite politeness with which Vincent met in her drawing-

rooms, sometimes at her dinner-table, Mr. Joseph Turtle, of Ogonia.

These civilities, it must be admitted, were repaid with slight gratitude. If at their first encounter Vincent had secretly repelled Mrs. Thorne, to Joseph Turtle he seemed to be the proverbial red flannel petticoat that incites the flagitious enterprise of the roving bull. The grandson of a Methodist bishop, Joseph had been brought up in the unquestioning faith of a sturdy puritanism that accepts no compromise, asks no indulgence. If in the crucible of his father's—the doctor's—scientific experiments he had left some dogmatic tenets with a good deal of their Christian charity, he had not lost their sustaining prejudices. Like nearly all men brought up within provincial limitations, great cities, and particularly their social evolution, op-

pressed him. He was offended at their wickedness. He saw little else. Men like Vincent, who have opinions in art and only tastes in morals, represented to him the dangerous outcome of a false civilization. Yet there are men who are kept moral by their taste! He feared for Coralie the insidious poison of such an atmosphere.

"She's a trump," he would say to himself, "but she's in a nest of asps here. I don't see how she'll escape their contamination."

With a view to forestall and prevent any such decadence on the part of his old friend—he was several years her senior, but he had frolicked with her in her childhood—he was never weary of inveighing against the hollowness and frivolity of people of fashion—the emptiness of their minds and hardness of their hearts. In truth, he

knew nothing whatever about them. The decorative side of life—so important to refinement—is harshly and unjustly judged by outsiders who can not gauge its significance. They refuse to see that the same brain and the same heart exist in every sphere under every garb. A man of the world does not entertain you with a detailed record of his child's illness, his wife's symptoms, his sister's unhappy marriage or his depleted bank account; he leaves his household gods at home. The ingenuous hind, accustomed to the belief that the details of his existence can be of importance to others, mistakes this reserve, the dwelling only on the ephemeral and lighter side of life, as a proof that cares are slighted and responsibilities shirked. Superficial in his way, he does not notice that this exterior is but the down on the fruit—the gold-

en dust on the butterfly's wing; that this brilliant surface is not the synthesis of a whole existence. In his simplicity he does not understand that the external flutter is not all; that there are deep unrest, battles bravely fought, duties met, sorrows borne, and even arduous intellectual labours accomplished under the feathers and the flippancy of opera, ball and street. To him the woman with bare shoulders must be immodest, the man whose clothes fit well a fop or a fool. He can not realize that there are people to whom the revealing of the hidden stress of life is as immodest and far more foolish than the trick of tailor or modiste; that these very people whom he severely censures hold many things too sacred to parade with which he makes his conversation ring, and that when all is said there is a form

of egotism which the salon has wisely banished.

To Mr. Turtle's diatribes Vincent invariably lent a courteous and attentive ear. But the study of his features at such moments was so amusing to Coralie that she could not resist turning her eyes in his direction to see the mixture of contempt and wonder which they expressed.

This attention and this urbanity of conduct, so belied by his countenance, would gradually have upon the unfortunate Turtle that curious disintegrating effect it had on others. He would flush and stammer uneasily, fume on his chair, finally becoming involved and incoherent in speech, tumble to pieces, as it were, and sit glowering, emitting now and then a growl like a giant held at bay. For a young giant he was. Six feet four in height, of enormous

breadth, strong as a steer, he sat huddled in his corner, a very epitome of unspent force. He was indeed a picturesque figure for a New York drawing-room, with the freshness of his complexion, rosy and white as a sucking pig's, his long upper lip, virgin of mustache and razor, his prominent nose and the length of his straight hair. His Titanesque body was usually arrayed in black broadcloth, which hung about it in limp folds. His long, pink hands swung at his sides like paddles, while his enormous feet were shod in thick-soled boots of Ogonia make and Ogonia mould. When he dined or passed the evening with his New York friends he was nearly always on his way to a night train, so that his much-worn, stained travelling-bag was deposited in the vestibule, where it never failed to arouse the risibility and jeers

of the men-servants; the vindictive pleasure of laughing at "the quality," when it fails to assert itself by elegance or expenditure, being one of the perquisites of service. Owing to these frequent journeys, he rarely appeared in a dress suit, Mrs. Thorne kindly waiving ceremony for his convenience. This dereliction annoyed Thorne, who considered the traveller's carelessness a mark of extreme ill-breeding, and who found Turtle insupportable in any costume. The latter continued to come, however, and thus became, at intervals, an *habitué* of the house.

Thorne did not enter on marriage in a gust of excitement, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. If this last injunction is excessive, we will say the fear of—himself. The wholesome fear of one's self is an incentive as well as a

safeguard. Did this ægis under which he had put himself in a moment of self-distrust sometimes weigh on him a trifle heavily? I think not. In justice to himself it may be said that Miss Darrell's gifts of fortune, while they had made his marriage possible—he could not have invited her to poverty—had weighed but slightly in his decision. Its motives were high; he met them valiantly. Too proud to bear dependence, he immediately set to work to better his own fortunes, and found the means engrossing. He liked the law; the ease of his circumstances permitted him to choose such branches of it as suited his aptitudes and talents. He realized that the influence of his wife's humorous, keen and philosophic mind made her companionship stimulating. It was certainly never dull. He felt with her sometimes that

strange sensation of shaking off old bigotries in the birth of new truths. She swept away cobwebs. Her freshness and originality vivified. Hamilton's proximity, his children, sufficed to fill his days. Entire sympathy between himself and Coralie he did not look for; he concluded it was best to do without it cheerfully. He vaguely regretted her lack of artistic skill in their *intérieur*, and also her failure to assert herself socially. Of course, the misunderstanding about the squib blew over, although she refused, with a woman's wilfulness, to show a proper measure of contrition. It went with those other frets and misunderstandings that prove organizations and ideas at variance. Nevertheless, he looked up to and respected her; while she gave him repeated proofs of an unselfish devotion. The lack of entire

comprehension between them caused him to throw himself more warmly into the activities of his profession. In these outside ambitions she was his helpmeet, lending her time and attention to his pursuits. So passed fifteen years, not all unhappily.

In the redecorated dining-room, which pleased Coralie, and was in fact improved, dinners were sometimes given. Some acquaintances, of course, were made. There was a whist club, an occasional ball; while just above their heads there danced and pirouetted a set of gayer people, rarely met, and only in those crowded, official gatherings where the lines of social demarcation are extended.

There were visits to the aunts and uncles on the Hudson, the solicitudes of fatherhood and motherhood, the purchase of a country estate on Long

Island. Ere we close this record of their earlier experience one word must be spoken of their first sorrow.

Little Viva was a ray of sunlight; Hamilton, her brother, a beam of moonlight. "Where is Tony?" was the first word of his father on returning from his office in the late afternoon; "Bring me Tony!" the exclamation of his awakening. And oh, the joyous antics, the shouts of glee, the breathless fun! What a roaring of bears and tomahawking of Indian chiefs, and puss-in-the-corner, and cat's-cradle for quieter moments, when papa was tired or had a headache! Coralie would come to the door in her *peignoir* and look in at them —at the handsome man and the exquisite child—so rapt in one another, and her heart would swell with pride at the thought, "I am the mother of that perfect creature!" And perfect he was!

His glorious eyes were like two stars; his little cheeks were pale with that divine pallor of childhood which holds no suggestion of ill-health; his dark curls grew low on his broad forehead; his nose was chiselled like a cameo; his lips were dewy and scarlet; his little teeth were white and even, and his breath was like violets after the rain. When at play he was full of the maddest mischief; yet for all that he was serious and thoughtful beyond his years.

Viva was always laughing and merry, with her amber curls and dimpled cheeks, but Tony was, in repose, full of dignity. "I was thinking," he used to say, when his uncle asked him why he was so quiet.

Viva had a pretty Skye terrier called Folly, which used to yap and bark at her heels. This pet accom-

panied the children on their daily walks.

When Hamilton was about nine years old, one day, as they came home, a huge bulldog sprang from a neighbouring yard, and unprovoked, planted its teeth in Folly's throat. Gurgling with terror, the pet turned supplicating eyes to its young mistress. She screamed and covered her face.

Tony, with frantic courage, rushed in between the combatants, fell on the brute and tore Folly from him, but not before the angry creature's jaw closed on his hand. A policeman came to the rescue. The animal was shot in the street.

When his mother came home, an hour later, the nurse and maids told her the story. Aghast and alarmed, she asked if they had instantly sent for a doctor, or rather, taken the child to

one. They had sent for the family physician. He had not yet arrived. She hurried to the nursery. Hamilton was playing ball with his sister, smiling and bright. She examined his hand. A dark purple spot where the blood clotted alone marred its transparent whiteness. She bundled him into her brougham and hurried to the nearest physician.

In a few minutes the wound, not larger than a ten-cent piece, was cauterized and dressed.

"I think you have no cause for anxiety," said the doctor, answering kindly the fixity of her searching gaze.

She did not like to say much before the boy.

"We have such cases daily, and never hear of them again. All goes well."

When they returned the family doc-

tor was waiting in the hall. Another examination was made and all found rightly done.

Thorne and Darrell both remembered they had been bitten by dogs in their childhood. They talked cheerfully to Coralie.

She, too, was cheerful — terribly cheerful. One thing she refused—to send and find out if the killed dog had signs of—— No, it was simply impossible.

We are incapable of pushing certain hypotheses. The realization of our terrors would be too atrocious.

Six weeks passed. The child seemed in blooming health. They tacitly ceased to speak of it, the trio who watched him, although they furtively outwitted each other in their sleepless vigilance.

Calm was almost restored. Six weeks is a long time—or is it short?

They did not know. One morning, at the noonday meal, as the butler handed her son some meat, Coralie saw him pale.

"What is the *matter* with you?" she said.

She spoke in a voice that the child thought angry.

"Drink your milk!" she commanded, with parched tongue; "drink it, do you *hear* me?"

He took a few gulps.

"Well, how does it taste?"

Her fingers fell on his brown ones as they put down the glass.

"I don't know why, mamma, I don't seem to feel very hungry to-day."

"Are you not . . . *thirsty*?" she said, with glazed eyes on his.

"Not very," said the child, with a faint smile. "I feel a little sick at my stomach, mamma."

"Drink more milk," she said. "It'll cure you; *drink* it, do you hear me?"

The little fellow took up the glass once more. She felt as if her mind were wandering, lost in the illusions of some dreadful delirium.

Her husband, somewhat indisposed, had not gone down into the city. He was in his library. She went in.

"Hazard," she said.

"Well?"

But he knew when he saw her face. She came over to him. Their eyes met in mute misery.

"He *drank*," she said, "but wouldn't eat."

Thorne's lips left his teeth suddenly uncovered, like an animal's in pain, in a wan effort at a smile.

"My poor girl, you are frightening yourself unnecessarily; if he drank——"

"Send for the physician. I *forced* him to drink. It has come!"

She sat down, clasping her hands across her knees. "My lamb! my lamb! my lamb!" she moaned. "Why did I not see the red mark of doom on your white shoulder!"

The next day, while Darrell and the physicians conferred in inaudible whispers, their heads bent together in a corner of the room, two tall forms, with hands linked, leaned over the cot. His thin boy's arms drew them down close, close together to the pillow. His face looked already wise and old—sad like a man's who has solved all the knowledge of the terrible anguish of life. His voice hurt them. There was authority in it—something they would never forget.

"Mamma, pray for me! Papa, pray

for me! Mamma, pray! It's coming again, it's coming!"

That awful "it"—with the convulsed eyeball, the limb's contortion, the writhing lip leaving its fleck of foam on the counterpane!

When their darling was at rest—the slim, white body quiet, the waxen hands so strangely rigid, the lids fallen on those beautiful eyes forever—Hazard Thorne fell down at his wife's feet. Hiding his head on her knees, he sobbed out all his manhood's sorrow.

His cry rang through the night.

"Tony! Tony!"

He had once punished him in the last year; only once—had refused to take him for a promised drive because of some childish demeanour.

"I didn't take him!" he cried; "I didn't take him! I can see his little face at the window as I drove off. He

was disappointed. I had promised. I went without him. I left him. Tony, forgive! Tony, forgive! Oh, my God!"

She soothed him with soft words, caressing his hair.

Her own eyes were tearless.

## PART SECOND

### I

CORALIE had told Mrs. Safford that she was ambitious.

When Thorne ran for Congress she proved her words. That distinguished British canvasser, the wife of Devonshire, could not have organized a more sweeping campaign than did this daughter of the West. The executive ability inherited from her father served her now. No obstacle was too great, no exertion too wearisome for her to undertake. Thorne was a Republican. His township and his county were Democratic, but there were other counties, one of which was certain, others

wavering. The struggle would be close, therefore absorbing. There existed at this time an agitation in the village, the hamlet that nestled close to the fine estate of the new nominee.

It was the question of removal of a certain dock in a certain creek where the sand schooners came to load. The dock was old and unsightly. Two or three summer residents insisted that its contiguity infested their private beaches with marauders, also that it marred their view. On the other hand, to the villagers this spot was consecrated by long habit to the uses of their principal trade. Its removal farther up the creek, whose current was swift and which was crossed by a bar of sand, would, at low tide, greatly inconvenience the incoming barges. The question had, at the moment of Thorne's campaign, grown into a tilt

between the rich and the poor, and promised to play no small part in his canvass as it swelled to the dimensions of a political dispute.

The local lawyers, covered with documents, sat in the antechambers of the candidate, or waylaid him with petitions and expostulations on his lawn; and all the while the creek, with the insouciance of nature to human affairs, slept under its dumb shadows, while the barges went in and out.

Culture dislikes vehemence. Thorne was tired of the subject. Coralie, who herself had none of the patience that springs from indolence, was called on, nevertheless, to sacrifice herself. She relieved him of these interviews by listening to the slow-tongued arguments that tracked her to the garden and pursued her to the shore. She became entirely converted to the popular de-

mand. She felt that if her husband was to carry his own township he must respect the prejudices of its humbler inhabitants.

There was a little lady whose grounds grazed the creek's border, however, who had caused to be sent about a paper in favour of the innovation. Many powerful names were already affixed to it, and she waited to emphasize a direct attack when she should find Mr. Thorne alone and at her mercy. Returning from the city by a late train one warm summer night, she and Thorne—except for a sleeping business man or two—were the only occupants of the drawing-room car. Mrs. Farnham's bright eyes were quick to seize the propitious opportunity. She moved from her chair and seated herself just in front of Thorne.

It would have been difficult to say

of Mrs. Farnham that she was this or that, because she was always changing. She eagerly desired to detach herself—to be somebody—but she had never yet been able to determine what special rôle suited her best. All success dazzled her. She longed to soar. She was not scrupulous as to the means, only she did not always find that her imitation of successful people brought her to their levels. A superficial mimicry of other people's faults or virtues does not teach their force. One may divorce one's Josephine and break her heart without becoming a Napoleon; debauch one's moral conscience and not write Verlaine's poetry; send money to lepers without reaching the heights of a Father Damien. Mrs. Farnham was sometimes discouraged to find that her best efforts remained sterile, and wondered why. Even when, for a brief sea-

son, she taught in Sunday-school she failed to impress others with her sanctity; in fact, her aureole, like the discontented man's in Paradise, was found not to fit. The imitator's fantastic travesties lack the energetic and powerful conceptions that render master minds remarkable. Where convictions are unstable they are fruitless.

Here, at her very door, was a chance to become a political woman. Coralie's achievement filled her soul with envy. She therefore led the opposition.

"One forgets people who come to one's parties, but never those who don't," she said, laughingly, to Hazard. "You never come to ours, and so you are always in my thought."

Thorne murmured the excuse of pressing occupations.

"Oh, I know," said Mrs. Farnham. "I often ask myself why the frumps

one invites never have occupations or headaches. They always come, while the desired are so hard to get."

Thorne, like the average man, was not insensible to flattery. Mrs. Farnham was so extremely pretty! One wondered why, with her small feet and hands, perfect ankles and wrists, refined features and every mark of race, she remained hopelessly plebeian. "Past prayer," Mrs. Heathcote said. And there were people who felt the touch of those tiny, pink finger-tips to be unpleasant—like the contact of antennæ, probing, never compassionate. She had none of the delicacy of heart which understands the hearts of others. Her social talent was vulgar. Nevertheless, she had a quaintness in disposing of her own sex, to their disparagement, which entertained the gentlemen. A man's attack on men alarms women,

a woman's on women amuses men. She was also one of those ladies who think all husbands superior to their wives—except their own.

Thorne, bored all day in ill-smelling corridors and tobacco-stained lobbies, drew in now with a certain pleasure the perfume of her dainty personality. Perfectly gloved and booted, faintly scented with orris and heliotrope, magnetic currents seemed to flow from her yellow hair. One must not ask too much. A sudden egotistic sentiment led him to feel how pleasant patronage might be—that gift of office whose dream destroys more souls than it selects and saves. He liked to think this charming woman depended on him, looked up to him, hung on his words. He bantered and parleyed with the fair enemy. He was gallant. He lent a willing ear to her importunities and

took notes of them. He was pliant, half-yielding.

These weak moments, common to all men, the reaction from grinding cares, brought to Mrs. Farnham one of the few triumphs of her abortive ambition. For the next two weeks she followed up her advantage.

The flirtation was harmless enough; but Coralie was aghast to find her husband vacillating. Her representations went for nothing. He finally decided that the change at the creek would greatly enhance the value of property. Was he sincere? At any rate, he sided with his own class. When the great day waned, it was found that this defection had lost him his own town. By a close shave, however, and his wife's superhuman exertions, he carried the county. He was returned to Congress with an insignificant majority, at first

contested. But in the end he got in. So Coralie, in the flush of victory, forgave him. There was no smallness in her valiant soul. Of Mrs. Farnham's part in the business she knew nothing. Thorne considered it too insignificant to mention. But facts that determine action are never trivial. Their influences are the revealers of character.

They went, of course, to live in Washington. A large house, on a sunlit circle, to which a wing was added, was bought and furnished. And now Warren Vincent, who came to pass a week of their early instalment—Coralie weakly admitted to her husband that she wished him to see she had learned the difference between the antique and the modern—even Vincent could find little fault. The best architects and decorators had been em-

ployed, and this time to some purpose. The florist added his quota of talent. The conservatory blossomed and the boudoir budded. It was all handsome and in good taste. In the matter of toilette, too, Coralie had improved. She now thought it worth while to study the questions of fashion. She wished to advance her husband politically through her hospitalities. A well-dressed woman is sure of herself. She ordered very smart gowns indeed, and wore them with greater enthusiasm.

In New York she had not been a success. Too young for the chaperon's dais, too indifferent to dance and flirt, without those instigations of vanity which make society the rendezvous of gallantry and intrigue, New York, on the whole, bored her.

She felt no expectant thrill in climb-

ing, no ecstasy at reaching the top. The jealousies and animosities of rival leaders, the so-called "exclusives" who put up their shutters one day and batter down their walls the next, the chatter of women's luncheons and the tedium of heavy banquets wearied her insufferably. When rarely bidden to the daintier feasts that reporters do not record, she usually felt herself somewhat of an outsider. "I go from out, in; they go from in, out," she said to Genevieve Safford. "We don't meet. They are all intimate. They blackguard each other. They are dreadfully polite to me—as polite as we are to the man who wants to marry us and we don't want. Only love's free-masonry makes one capricious and tyrannical and rude. Love can afford it."

"Ah, you are too clever for them, dear," Mrs. Safford would reply.

"Nonsense! they are far cleverer. I haven't the grip. I am not *chic*, and there you have it."

But the capital was different. Here were a wider field, larger topics, an emulation whose prizes seemed less frivolous, more variety—the Representatives, the Senators with their wives and daughters, the Cabinet, the White House. There was the handful of fashionable women who entertained New Yorkers and the diplomatic corps, spent their "season" in London, married their girls to peers and princes, and were detested by the descendants of the colonial residents.

She opened her doors. To her they all came. She became popular. When, two years later, Thorne went to the Senate, their entertainments were the most talked of in Washington. Mrs. Hazard Thorne's place was assured.

She enjoyed it hugely. It was all new and odd, and her sense of humour found ample aliment. She was pleased at her husband's indubitable prowess, proud of his ascendency, full of zeal; and she gave the warmest interest to the development of her young daughter, Viva, a comely and gifted girl.

Mrs. Safford came now and again to pass some weeks with her. Their friendship remained. Coralie was too honest to discard the affections and companionships of her past, even Joseph Turtle's. Impoverished by an unfortunate business venture, he had captured, through Coralie's influence with the Administration, the Persian mission.

He sent her his photograph from his distant post, as he appeared at his first presentation, in a high hat, dress coat,

and bare feet. Its grotesqueness was the source of much merry laughter.

The city, designed while Washington was President, when our public men were endowed with prophetic foresight, planned by the same French engineers who remodelled Paris, delighted her. She liked to lose herself in its labyrinthian network of streets and radial avenues, in its Mall, its parks and squares and gardens, to gaze up at the white-winged dignity of the Capitol, with its enshrining historic vision, to loiter in the lonely pathways of the Soldiers' Home or gaze from the heights of melancholy Arlington, amid its memories of heroes, across the misty banks of the Potomac. So she was happy.

## II

At this time there were two women swimming on "the great third wave" of Washington society—in other words, who were watched and discussed, admired and despised, loved and hated—who were important. One was a foreigner, the wife of a minister, a Greek princess by birth. She had been whipped through poverty into marrying an elderly diplomat, who adored her, and whom she recklessly and persistently rendered ridiculous.

She was about thirty and very beautiful. Socrates insists virtue can not be taught. At whatever well Hélène de Mossig had drunk her early draughts

of knowledge, the springs of wisdom and discretion had been dry. A creature of whim, swayed by violent and ardent caprice, unexplained attractions and unaccountable aversions. Vain and sensual, without ambitions except those of personal gratification, not intellectual, scarcely intelligent, she possessed some quality that attracted men, even those who judged her severely. Madame de Mossig was not modern. She was content to be a woman. The weapons she wielded were those of sex. It is these that have forced the inequalities of Latin legislation—those distrustful laws that count a woman as a dangerous little beast who must be beaten and crushed. Always surrounded by admirers, principally young secretaries of legation, Coralie had wittily christened her court the "de Mossig attachés."

The refined masculinity of figure of the tall, straight American girl—with her narrow chest and hips, her falling shoulders, her thin throat—who has practised high kicking, can lift her foot to the level of her head, and jump from her own height without hurting herself, was not hers. Her full bosom, her undulating movements, her languid manner, made of her a creature all fire and danger. A fire and danger, however, that did not touch the deeper fibres of the soul. She was of the earth, earthy, and as such she was very good. Indeed, she could not be called a wicked woman, if the strength of sin is the law; for she knew no law save that of her own wilful fancy. She was not malicious, and she was not what women call "cattie." This negative tribute may, at least, be thrown into the balance of her meagre moral luggage.

The lady who disputed with Madame de Mossig—though with but slight endeavour of her own—the palm of social notoriety was of a distinctly different type. She was an American. In her veins a mixture of Southern and New England blood lent a healthy blend of nonchalance and enterprise. Less regularly beautiful than the Greek, she possessed a harmony of person which, in its highest form, is never an acquisition, but a gift—the dower of an engaging personality. Conscious struggle for ease is without result; too many more important things are sacrificed.

Mrs. Arden made none of those elephantine efforts to be charming which interfere with the comfort of onlookers. She was simply born so. It was somewhat strange that neither of these women, so fitted to the frame of lux-

ury, possessed wealth. The minister's wife lived and received with simplicity. Leah Arden was poor. She was separated from a hopelessly dissipated and impecunious husband, who was never kind to her except after ill-using her. Of an even and amiable temper, she had borne with his vagaries until her family, fearing for her safety, interfered. They arranged a *modus vivendi* —apart. No decree of divorce was procured. "I am neither fish, flesh nor fowl," she used to say, laughing. "But at least I have got back my peace."

She lived in a tiny house in an unfashionable street, with her mother and a couple of maids. She never invited anybody to anything but a cup of tea —even to this but a chosen few. Nevertheless, no dinner-party, no dance, no cavalcade in early spring to country tryst or rally-hunt, was thought com-

plete without her presence. Mrs. Arden was, in fact, one of those women peculiarly fitted for out-of-door amusements, which seemed to enhance her Hebe-like bloom. It was, indeed, very different from the hectic, feverish note of Madame de Mossig's loveliness, which was at best in lighted drawing-rooms.

The rival beauties had each her own particular followers and trumpeters. Yet they were not enemies. There even existed between them a considerable display of feminine friendliness, until there came between them that mischievous perturber of such alliances—the man!

As the representative of a minor court, Madame de Mossig's place at banquets, if not "below the salt," was not always at the host's right hand. She was more apt to be flanked by a

member of the Cabinet or a congressman than by an ambassador. She never quarrelled with the fact when chance or choice—for she ended by frankly naming to her hostess her favourite cavalier—brought her shoulder to shoulder with the handsome New York senator.

Thorne had improved rather than deteriorated in personal equipment since we first made his acquaintance. The vanished roundness and smoothness of youth left his features chiselled, as it were, into a new and indefinable distinction, while the sorrow of his son's death—that one inconsolable misfortune—and the common vicissitudes of all existence gave them greater sweetness. His had been none of those experiences that trace the marks of bitterness and dig the furrows of discontent. He had known one great grief,

hardly anguish. The first is simple and clear, and must be bowed to; into the second enter the elements of uncertainty and of conflict. No cancerous envy drained the generosities of his judgment, no paltry makeshifts of his purse. The furtive skulking of dishonour never even brushed him. He always walked erect where others have to crouch. His hair, now swept with gray, had lost none of its silky thickness. His step was as agile, his eye as piercing, as when he had been jostled at foot-ball in his college days or wrestled in the gymnasium for prizes of athletic skill. His spareness had taken on that weight of the middle years which sometimes turns angularity to elegance. He was always well dressed.

What was wanting to him? When he searched the recesses of his being he sometimes asked himself, what, in-

deed? Yet somehow Thorne had a dim conviction that happiness had passed him by. One profound experience, which every creature dares expect, had not been his. He knew that he had never entirely loved a woman. He believed, with frank modesty, that none had ever entirely loved him. His few "successes" with the other sex had left on him, on the whole, a disagreeable impression. He had now long been too absorbed in his career to give to women more than a passing glance. This may have sprung as much from apathy as from any distinct determination of absolute loyalty to his wife. His attachment to her was sincere and serious. Sympathetic to him she was not. He philosophically concluded that in escaping the meshes of passion he had escaped their pain. And he tried to feel extremely grateful.

Now, all at once, to his amusement first, later to his dismay, he found himself the selected target for Madame de Mossig's assaults of coquetry. But coquetry with her was no mere game. She lacked the discipline of the accomplished flirt. And the *toquade* that Thorne excited in her at their first introduction grew in a few short weeks to an infatuation that she was at no pains to conceal or deny.

The compliments he paid to her, with the happy tranquility of his incontestable charm, an accidental walk or two, one bouquet, one drive in his T-cart through country lanes, were enough. When he saw what he had done, his alarmed attitude of reserve finished the work. What would have discouraged a delicate nature whetted her coarser one. She was one of those women whom obstacles fret to mad-

ness. Against his will he found himself pursued by another will with a challenge bordering on impudence.

He woke for the first time to the realization of what such power over another might mean. Madame de Mossig was admirably beautiful, and she was his slave. On the whole, in one of those situations that even a Saint Anthony might have found disturbing, he conducted himself with honour. It may be said that it was made easier to him because he was not in the least enamoured of the lady. To be desired may be disquieting, it is hardly enticing to a man of Thorne's temperamental dignity. He felt that he was only less absurd than the unfortunate husband, who was sometimes called on to minister to his wife's hysterics. A scene she made at a dinner at the British Legation, when she found that

Thorne was not to be her neighbour, but Mrs. Arden's—toward whom she now developed a furious dislike—forced him to almost brutal measures. Thorne had no wish to have his privacy invaded by curious eyes and tattling tongues. His whispered words so carelessly uttered in the days of their dawning acquaintance had really borne too wild a fruit. He became sick of the whole affair—disgusted. He also knew that in America such scrapes have clipped the wings of more than one political eagle. Whatever a man's resources may be, it is difficult for him to escape from such a trap without offering to the woman actual insult. But he managed to escape.

The de Mossigs left for Virginia; he and Coralie, during the recess of Congress, for a brief European tour.

This would have been the end of the

whole matter had not an occurrence the following winter given fresh impetus to gossip. Madame de Mossig, who had been ten years childless, gave birth to a son.

## III

It was at this juncture that Mrs. Farnham, who, through all her fads, always hugged the one of social prominence, decided to pass a month in Washington. Hearing constantly of the leading rôle played by the Thornes in the gaieties of the capital, she concluded that she was neglecting her opportunities.

Her first advances, when once settled with her maid at the Shoreham, in an apartment for which she paid a great deal and got very little, were to the senator. She had left her husband behind her as a superfluous commodity; male support was imperative. If

Thorne had forgotten her temporary capture of him at the time of the creek controversy, she had not. She sent a note, not to his house, but to his club. Her mistake did not strike her until his formal bow, when he passed her in the street one day. His card, posed without inquiry, warned her that she had committed an error of taste. In anything but an amiable mood, after this ill-digested snub, she had herself conveyed to the mansion on the circle to call officially on Mrs. Thorne. The answer to this was an immediate bunch of roses, with an invitation to drive the next afternoon. Coralie always kindled to old associations. She had seen little for a couple of years of her country neighbours, having spent her summers in Europe. Mrs. Farnham had at no time been congenial to her, but all snobbishness was so abhorrent to her

that she would not seem to slight old acquaintances. Coralie often dropped cards at palaces, but she always clambered up the narrow stairs of out-of-the-way apartment-houses to make sure that their inhabitants should know she had called in person.

At four o'clock the following day horses pranced at the Shoreham's doorway. As Mrs. Farnham tucked in her draperies next to those of the senator's wife she was impressed with the fact that never in her life had this lady looked so well.

She wore one of those gowns and one of those hats which are such triumphs of talent that the plainest woman is redeemed. And she was now very far from plain. There was in her whole person a radiance—that "something splendid" which Genevieve Safford dwelt on in her first interview

with Hazard. The dress of dark blue velvet, with its toque to match, bordered at throat, wrists and brim with superb sable, the becoming veil, the well-fitting shoes, the lorgnon with its diamond monogram dangling on a chain of gold, and fine, pure pearls—to-day, at any rate, Mrs. Thorne was handsome. The admiration that her perfect equipage inspired in the gaping loafers, idlers, porters of the sidewalk and the vestibule gave Mrs. Farnham a sense of reflected consequence. She tossed her head and felt glad she had accepted, glad she had come to Washington, glad this time, at least, she had made no blunder. It is pleasant to be in the winning boat.

It is the privilege of stupidity, however, to disturb the sleeping dog, to kill the goose that lays the egg; and Mrs. Farnham was stupid, with the

stupidity of her little, hard heart and her little, narrow brain. She felt disappointed when Mrs. Thorne bade her servant drive toward Arlington, her favourite road. She would have liked to keep in the streets, the thoroughfares, to be seen. It is not worth while to go out with people who are *à la mode* if nobody knows about it. She asked Mrs. Thorne to stop at a stationer's, ordered some note-paper she didn't need, and dallied some time at a florist's over some plants for her drawing-room, which were far too expensive. She was rewarded for her stratagem by encountering some acquaintances, and could say to them as she left, "Mrs. Thorne is waiting for me; so sorry; the horses are spirited, they don't like standing."

When she ensconced herself again in the smart victoria and was bowled,

rather unwillingly, toward the more lonely suburbs, she pondered on what trick of fate assists certain women to superiority over their fellows. Petty natures are apt to suspect pettiness in others. She concluded that under Mrs. Thorne's gracious questionings as to her plans in Washington there lay a patronizing condescension. This impression, born of a mean suspicion, joined to the rankling memory of Thorne's incivility, filled her with a sort of blind resentment against her unconscious interlocutor. "She feels her oats," she thought to herself; "and what wonder? What is she, after all, but a parvenu? If it hadn't been for her money Thorne wouldn't have looked at her. I remember when she was gawky and a dowdy. She looks well now on account of her clothes. What clothes can do! Such a poise!

Such airs! Can she have heard the de Mossig yarn, I wonder, or does she still think her hubby a Galahad? What would she say if she knew how he can flirt when her back's turned?"

From these inchoate currents of reflection Mrs. Farnham took a dive into deep waters. She began to speak of Madame de Mossig and the tales about her behaviour. Mrs. Thorne's calm, gray-blue eyes turned on her in such candour, while she took the Greek's part and extolled her beauty, that Mrs. Farnham became exasperated. Pushed by one of those silly impulses to which women of her nervous pattern are subject, she blurted out the words before she half-decided to utter them.

"How outrageous people are! You can speak well of her, when the political enemies of your husband have the indecency to insist he is the father of

her child! I have been so sorry for him, so indignant for you!"

She regretted the speech as soon as made; but it was too late.

We may here say that the blown bubble had thus far passed without bursting over Coralie Thorne's head, that it was left to Mrs. Farnham to prick it and bespatter her. It is an anomaly of this topsy-turvy world of ours that the calumnies which most nearly concern us are frequently those we are the last to hear. Coralie was so popular in Washington—nay, so beloved—that no word connecting her husband with Madame de Mossig had reached her. Apart from the friendly sentiment that hushed the prattling busybodies in her presence, the surroundings of official life and of wealth, while they may have given tongue to the hounds, in a measure kept them at

bay. If Coralie's noble simplicity won for her a respect that shrinks from wounding, her entourage of extreme luxury was also a special rampart. It kept intruders at a distance. The formalities of great houses make their privacy more inviolable.

"Indignant for you! . . ."

One could almost hear the rattle of the armour's buckle, the click of the closed visor. It was a valiant front Coralie presented to her tormentor. She, at least, was no "scatterer." She gauged in an instant the necessity of silencing this insect, lest it do further damage. How could she understand this bloodless parasite that sucked in the dark for its mean thirst! It should, at any rate, not see the sting inflicted. Let it be said to her infinite honour, it was of her husband that she thought. With a confused wish to save him from

such poison she met Mrs. Farnham's cruel words with a gay laugh, a laugh in which it would have taken experienced ears to detect a tinge of overacted exuberance.

"Dear me!" she said; "is my poor Hazard another of that obstreperous infant's—godpapas? How inexpressibly comic! Really, you know I'm dying to make him shout over it! They are reaching sublimity in quantity, at least, if not in quality."

She laughed once more and deftly turned the subject to other channels, but without the shock that betrays design. And never on the homeward drive, or when she pressed Mrs. Farnham's hand and begged her to dine the following Thursday, "At half past eight, my dear," did a moment's weakness expose her emotion.

"I don't believe there's anything in

it," thought Mrs. Farnham. "She didn't seem to care a bit, or take it tragically. She's hardly the sort of woman to be clever at dissembling. Well, I'm glad there was no harm done. I felt worried after I spoke." She was not a fiend, after all, and was, on the whole, relieved.

No harm!

Coralie got to her apartments, she hardly knew how. She rang the bell.

"Ask Mr. Darrell to come to my study," she said to the answering domestic. "And tell Mariette to go to my room and prepare my dinner gown and jewels; tell her I'll wear my black velvet and sapphires."

The affection between Thorne and Darrell had never abated. It is obvious, however, that when one makes of one's chum a brother-in-law, it is rather a bar than an instigation to complete

confidence. When one's wife is one's friend's sister many details of experience cease to be recounted. Affection continued, intimacy was less close. Then, of course, the *épanchements* of youth can not continue, and a measure of reserve sprang up between the friends, while their mutual regard did not cool.

Darrell, full of philanthropic and active benefactions, protector of civic improvements, promoter of artistic enterprises, was by no means a lazy man of leisure. Nevertheless, he found time to visit his relatives, and frequently came to pass a Sunday in their cheerful company. He was very fond of his niece Viva, and found with his dear trio the outlet for a tenderness he had not bestowed on wife or children of his own.

"Ask Mr. Darrell to come to me."

She felt as if she were stifling. The fact that her husband had gone to New York for thirty-six hours paralyzed the hunger of all hot characters for immediate explanation. She knew a letter could not reach him and be answered —a telegram was out of the question. How should she possess her soul until his return, until she could look into his face and know for herself!

For this bolt out of a clear sky had struck her dumb. She had, indeed, heard much of Madame de Mossig's conduct, and had herself smilingly called her court "the attachés," but the paternity of the son had not been doubted in her presence, and Mrs. Farnham's filthy innuendo had pierced her clean spirit to its depths. Her reply she felt to have been odious. She shrank disgusted at her own adroitness.

Hamilton might bring her some

comfort—some, until Thorne came himself and stamped out with one word this nest of hornets.

Darrell found her pacing the floor in agitation. As she had hoped, his counsels gave her consolation.

He pointed out to her the difficulties and dangers that beset men in public office. The grudge, the spite, the backbiting, that she, too, if she intended to help her husband, must learn to face.

"There will soon," said Coralie, "be a vacancy in the Cabinet. I heard yesterday Lawler will resign on account of his health. I wanted it for Hazard; I know he can have it. The President as much as said so to General Bates, who came to sound me. And my hopes are not all selfish. It was not for myself—hardly for him. I think men like my husband, who have had such advan-

tages, can do something for humanity. I was keeping this surprise for him. I thought he would be so pleased, . . . but if he lets people say such things about him, gets himself so bedraggled, who will stand by him?"

Darrell was touched that all her fears seemed for her husband. But now, at last, there came the woman's cry.

"I always felt a shrinking from her. I have been an idiot not to see she was after him. Only the other day I was a fool, taking up the cudgels for her. General Bates said to me, cynically, 'Oh, you don't know women.' He was right; I do not. What a child I have been! Oh, my God! Hamilton, tell me it's all a hideous lie!"

"I know it's a lie!" said Darrell, sternly. Then, in his gentleness, he added, "Men like Thorne don't leave

such a creature as you are for such as she." But as he spoke the words, they sounded foolish to him. He came and patted her hand and hair, and she wept on his breast, and by-and-bye she tried to smile and went up to dress. For one always has to go and dress.

Thorne came home and met his wife. They had an hour's talk together. In disengaging himself from blame, he did all that is in the power of a gentleman to throw no mud on the fame of Hélène de Mossig. Nevertheless, as the conjugal horizon must at all costs be kept clear, she had, to a certain extent, to be sacrificed. She had been very foolish, and Coralie guessed that if not guilty—at least with Hazard—it was not her fault. She essayed to absolve her husband from all part in the folly, but not until she extracted from him a promise that there should be no more

drives, no more walks, and no bouquets sent to aggressive fair ones. In other words, she did and said exactly what every jealous woman has done and said before her—committed the colossal mistake of pledging her husband to a course that their worldly environment made almost impossible. This course has never failed to drive a man to prevarication, if not to falsehood. It was easy for him to promise never to see Madame de Mossig again in tête-à-tête, never to approach her in public, unless through exigency of etiquette; but it is not easy to take vows that a call shall not be paid or a courtesy extended to any woman. No *femme du monde* ever exacts such assurances, knowing their puerility and inefficacy. Coralie, later, in a saner moment, removed the embargo, begging her husband to do whatever he saw fit; but Thorne in-

stinctively knew that the seeds of distrust had sprung up in her.

"I hope that Farnham woman will never cross this threshold," he said, angrily, after their first exhaustive talk.

"Mrs. Farnham will dine here on Thursday," said Coralie, with haughtiness, "and she will sit on your left."

In fact, she developed after this a curious inconsequence. Sometimes she would be profoundly melancholy, sometimes exaggeratedly merry. "That tale annoyed her," said the senator's ill-wishers. "The poor thing's growing quite flighty."

Her caustic sallies were now and again directed, in Hazard's hearing, on the de Mossig household. One day, indeed, she had met the husband carefully tooling the baby's perambulator, while the child's nurse followed with a large umbrella. "He was so proud,"

she said, "he stopped me as well as all the passers-by." To Thorne—whose wife's temperament had always remained a sealed book—how she could laugh at and belittle what had caused her such keen suffering was incomprehensible. He realized that only infinite tact and patience could extricate him from a pass of possible portentous consequence. He was a little tired of his wife's vagaries, irritated at what might be expected of him.

She seemed timidly to dread his displeasure, while far less careful than formerly not to deserve it. She grew shy of him. She withdrew herself. Her state of mind was revealed in a letter received by her friend Genevieve in the spring. It ended thus:

". . . So much for the flaring, glaring life! You ask, dearest, for a word

of the hidden one. What shall I say to you? What will you say to me? When I was very young I knew love and all its torments. We recognise the symptoms. Can you fancy such a psychological enigma as a woman who has felt a deep affection for her husband for years, but with no—excitement, suddenly plunged into the abyss of jealous distrust and all its evil attendants? —above all, fear of herself? What does it mean? Have I fallen in love with my own husband? How unfashionable! Now that I see his power in all directions, I tremble. I tremble all the time lest I bore him, lest I be insufficient. I am unhappy. My heart is hurt; my vanity *froissée.* I didn't know I had any! I think I am one of those women who have *l'amour triste.* I used to be grateful for my composure. It is all gone. I am often horrid to him.

He can not understand. How should he? Good-bye, dear."

No, he could not understand; but understanding might only have wearied him. He asked only for peace at home, and behold there loomed a threatening sword.

In the meanwhile, de Mossig was notified by his government of a changed post. He and Madame de Mossig, the nurse, the baby and the perambulator sailed away from the United States forever.

## IV

He did not understand, or he would not. A coldness rose between them, alas! And it was in the following autumn that he began to find solace, a solace from which he had resolutely for many long months turned away; for he knew, as men know these things, that here was his Waterloo. He had always known it. From that first time they had touched hands—and oddly enough, in Madame de Mossig's boudoir—there had existed between them that magic fire which warns of peril. Nothing, however, could have been more veiled, decorous, delicate, than their intercourse.

When he and Leah Arden were put side by side at dinner parties they were both conscious of a sort of breathless wonder. Sometimes, as his eyes sank into hers, her lids would flutter like a dove's. He got to like to watch this fluttering. Sometimes she smiled full into his face, and the blood would surge to it from his heart. They never talked much. It seemed needless. There was nothing to say. They knew all. Her slight figure, her low laughter, her gestures, the talent with which she managed to look better dressed than other women in her unadorned gowns—everything in her pleased his taste. By-and-bye he became so restless out of her presence, so content when in it, he got into the habit of dropping in of an afternoon at her mother's house; the shabby little house in the shabbier street, so sadly in need of paint out-

side, but whose interior showed the refinement that gilds poverty. He rarely found her alone. Usually Mrs. Deventer, her mother, was present.

One day the latter consulted him on an investment she had made. His associations with finance committees gave him an authority that promised her enlightenment. This became an excuse for frequent conference. Once or twice Mrs. Deventer, who was an invalid, was in her room, and Leah and Thorne discussed together, in the cosy drawing-room, the resources that seemed to him so pitifully slender.

He began to feel a longing to assist these ladies to an income more worthy of their station. He did, in fact, once speculate for them with such conservative sagacity as placed them indirectly under obligation. His request that this act of friendship should remain secret

seemed to cement the tacit compact that was to have such fateful results. In the meantime, Mrs. Arden, while not an intimate of Mrs. Thorne's, sometimes went to her house. Their relations continued cordial.

Leah Arden could hardly be said to be a woman of robust principle. She was not perfectly sure that the virtuous were happy and the wicked miserable. She vaguely hoped these things were so. She was, however, far from being an *intriguante.* Her serene, pleasure-loving mind caught at passing distractions and dallied with them. Her marital misfortune left her the philosophy to grasp what was left of life without insistent intention. She really had no scheme. When this new, sweet triumph came to her of Thorne's less and less disguised devotion, she played with the bright flame and burned her hand.

This time the revelation of her husband's fresh imprudence came to Coralie direct and through no outsider. She by accident opened a note of Mrs. Arden's to him.

The Thornes had not the vulgar habit common to many married persons of rifling each other's correspondence. It was quite unintentionally that Mrs. Thorne broke the seal of this particular envelope, thrust on her by an inadvertent servant. She opened it with many others directed to herself.

The missive in itself was unimportant—unimportant except as it disclosed a degree of familiarity of which she was ignorant. There was an allusion, "When you came last Sunday," a word of badinage about some person met at Mrs. Deventer's house, who was unknown to Coralie even by name, a vague hint that the writer would occu-

py a certain box at the theatre with friends on a certain evening. It seemed an invitation.

The words were few. She had scanned them all before she realized they were not for her.

She put them back in their envelope, and finding a pencil on her desk, wrote on the margin: "Pardon; opened by mistake.—C. T." She rang for her maid and bade her give this letter to the senator's valet for his master.

She then went down to receive a French diplomat's wife who brought letters of introduction. She was a little, dark, frightened thing, a bride, just from a wretched ocean voyage, separated for the first time from her mother and her people. She looked very youthful and very homesick. She insisted on speaking in the halting English la-

boriously collected before her departure.

"All I ate, did eat, should eat, did render me sick," she said. "And oh! it was so *triste* in the days that the *pont* was wet and we were like rats in the dark! And I am yet sick."

Coralie sympathized and was kind, and the stranger's frozen heart melted at the contact of that large nature, of that warm presence which cared for others' troubles.

She had been taken to a party the night after her arrival, and now, trying to appear *au fait* and not a novice, she made comments on the celebrities there pointed out to her. Among others she spoke of Leah Arden. "There was a Madame Ardenne," she said. "My husband, he does think her so pretty! Do you think her so pretty?"

Coralie replied, with sudden gravity, "Yes."

"I do not think, I do not find it," said the French girl, with an intonation that seemed to hide a wound. "I tell my husband perhaps it is that she talks pretty. Does she talk pretty?"

"Not half as prettily as you do English," said Coralie, comfortingly. "Your accent is so captivating, all the gentlemen will be falling in love with you."

The small face was brightened by a smile, but the dark eyes filled with tears. "Edouard had to be presented to all," she said, "a quantity of *monde.* I was alone. If you had been there, madame, I should not have been so miserable."

"I hope you will get to like Washington when you know us better," said Coralie, cheeringly.

"I had a friend at this legation, two years passed," said the little woman. "She did tell me the climate was too bad here. She got the miasma—malaria, you say? She said the first winter she did lose her teeth, the second her hair, the third her reputation."

"I thought," said Coralie, laughing in spite of herself at this lurid portrayal of Washington's advantages, "when a woman lost the first two the last was safe."

This witticism was thrown away on her visitor, who remained sunk in gloom. She spoke English better than she understood it.

After a cup of tea she at last got herself off, Mrs. Thorne promising to call on her soon.

"*Oh, venez bientôt, je vous en prie,*" she said, gratefully. "I do so much like you."

Coralie went up once more to her study; it opened into her bedroom on one side, on the other into the palm-embowered Louis Seize boudoir, where she informally received her closer friends.

She walked now from one to the other—a habit contracted when in deep thought. Her gown trailed over the fur rugs with their interstices of polished parquet; a tepid sunset streamed through the windows, flecking the floor with streaks of light. Cautious and circumspect she decided that she would be. No repetition, this time, of the outbursts that had met the de Mossig incident, and had been so injudicious.

As to the man who has not touched a woman's hand, her physical charm is only food for the imagination, so to him who has not fathomed a woman's soul its harmonies remain unwritten music.

Thrust back on herself she now was wiser, yet a sense of drifting farther and farther from him came to her through her self-control.

When he came, a half-hour later, to find her, with Mrs. Arden's letter in his hand, and she looked at him, she felt as if he had shrunk in his clothes —that they were but a bundle of dry goods and he a wound-up automaton animating them grotesquely. The momentary eclipse of her strength of character, which he had failed to read as a guide to her sentiment, was well over, or so she imagined. She was now mistress of herself, or so she thought.

His justification of Mrs. Arden's note was as satisfactory as such things ever are. He pointed out to her that had there been the slightest clandestine element in their acquaintance, she

would have sent her letter to his club and not to his house. The momentary arching of an eyebrow warned him that this last intimation was ill-advised. Mrs. Thorne listened to him, however, without one sign or word of displeasure. When he finished he was so disconcerted by her attitude he wished he had left the matter alone.

"Now, my dear," she said, nodding pleasantly, "don't waste any more of your time, but go and dress for dinner. Please don't be late, as you were yesterday, for there are a lot of people coming, and we are going, after, to the play."

He had explained to her about Mrs. Deventer's investments, and that it was to discuss this subject Mrs. Arden had seemed to give him a rendezvous. "I suppose," he added, lingering on the threshold, "knowing what a busy

man I am, she didn't like to ask me to call."

"I hardly read the letter," and then he had a view of his wife's back as she disappeared into her bed-room and closed the door. Verily, Warren Vincent's pupil had learned her lesson. Thorne had, in fact, avoided asking Mrs. Arden to address any stray note she might indite to his club, and he now rather cursed the over-sensitiveness that had caused complication.

Yet what? Was it not his own morbid conscience that made him feel complication existed?

If we have failed to point out that Thorne possessed a conscience, we have indeed failed in the portrayal of his character. He who had been made wretched for months at the memory of a rebuke administered to his dead boy could not be devoid of sensibility. Yet

so inconsequent were the verdicts of his detractors that the very ones who shrieked to the stars their commiseration for Coralie now blamed him for having been needlessly harsh in his treatment of Madame de Mossig—his cold shaking-off of her. There was no doubt that she had suffered—a condition for which his amiable philandering was perhaps responsible—but Thorne had felt further dalliance in that quarter an insult to his wife, and if there was cruelty it was the unconscious one of a lack of perception. Now he felt sorry if his wife was annoyed, but Coralie played her part so admirably that, as the days went on, he told himself that he exaggerated her suspicions. We exaggerate what we know to be well founded.

He could no longer conceal to himself that he was gripped by a sorcery

against which reason beat itself vainly, before which morality was dumb.

And it was all so refined, so exquisite, so elevating; above all, they were so happy! For every word was now an avowal, every touch a joy, while they lingered still in that middle land which beckons, yet withholds. How events would have shaped themselves it is difficult to predict, had not the *dénouement* of the drama been hastened by an untoward incident.

One day, while in the Senate chamber, Thorne tardily remembered that it was his wife's birthday. In the pressure of public business, perhaps of private obsession, he had failed to recall it. With a sense of unusual compunction he ran out at the luncheon hour to a neighbouring florist's and ordered sent some splendid flowers, with a word on his card. He asked her to meet him

at five o'clock at their stables, where he should stop to see a pair of horses he thought of purchasing for her. "If you like," he said, "we can put them in the cart and try them for a half-hour."

His messenger returned with a note from his wife, thanking him for the roses, but saying she was suffering from a severe *migraine* and had gone to bed.

His day was an exhausting one. A long debate on questions of moment, of which the details were dry and arid, drained his vitality and sapped his mental faculties. When he sprang into a cab, at half past four, he felt so tired that he thought he would go directly home, but passing close to his stable-doors, he concluded to see the nags. He was fagged, not dressed, out of mood. As the groom put the horses

through their paces in front of the sidewalk where he stood, he suddenly saw a graceful figure on the opposite side of the street. All fatigue left him at once. He was only sorry he hadn't had time to change his clothes.

Mrs. Arden crossed and joined him. "What perfect beauties!" she said, standing by his side, looking up at him, her hands in her little muff. "You must be wild to try them."

The odour of the violets she wore sent sweet elixirs to his weary brain; their breath seemed to enfold them both as they listened dreamily to the beat of the horses' hoofs on the pavement. The moment was like heaven to Thorne after the murky atmosphere of political squabbling and suffocating ugliness.

By one of those impulses that come to the most sedate of us, after long

confinement to heated inactivity of body, "Brien," he said to his coachman, "how long will it take you to harness? I'll do without you or Thomas —there isn't time for you to get on your togs. Just slip their collars on and tie them up to the cart."

"Less than fifteen minutes, sir," replied the man, whistling to Thomas, who was still running up and down the street with the pair.

"It's quite too dark now for you to walk home alone," said the senator to Mrs. Arden, decidedly. "I'll drive you to your door. They seem perfectly gentle."

They walked about, waiting, the night wind wooing their lungs. The dusk crept about them as if to draw them closer to each other. He stooped and drew her fur collar up about her throat caressingly. Leah was one of

those bright beings to whom pleasure is more than pride, delight than dignity. This is probably the reason that they—arrive. Pride and dignity are handicaps. So, when the trap was ready, he lifted her to his side, dispensing with the footman, and they drove away.

The lamps were lit. The avenues were growing deserted. There seemed no chance of an encounter with acquaintances. At any rate, the rashness of this innocent escapade intoxicated them. What more natural than to prolong the drive a little?

He whipped the horses up toward the British Embassy. By the time they reached it the weather changed. The wind blew in gusts, drops of rain began to fall. He handed her the reins while he opened an umbrella that the groom had tucked under his feet. The man

had seen the rising storm. They turned back. A few minutes later, darting out of shadow, a woman in a long black coat crossed nearly under the wheels. Mrs. Arden pulled in, but not before the pole almost grazed her. The woman uttered a faint cry, and her white face looked up at them.

It was Coralie.

Thorne felt impelled to stop and call to her, but was so paralyzed by the unexpected apparition that his voice failed. Before either of them could muster energy to meet a situation demanding instant action she disappeared.

When Thorne reached the house he went direct to her boudoir.

She was alone before the fire, standing, and as he approached she did not seem to heed him.

"Coralie," he said.

She turned and struck him full in the face with the back of her hand. She wore a cameo ring, sharply terminated at both ends with a diamond. One of them cut the skin on his thin cheekbone. A drop of blood oozed and slowly dropped down his face.

## V

NOTHING more simple than Mrs. Thorne's hapless promenade. At four she awoke, refreshed and cured. Her room was full of the fragrance of her husband's gift. She took the cup of tea her maid brought to her bedside, and decided that it was not too late to surprise him. She would keep the tryst that he asked of her. She felt sure he would stop to see the horses.

She dressed, donned a long coat in case they should drive, and walked to the stables. All this took time. When she reached them her husband and Mrs. Arden had already left.

Brien, whether through loyalty to his master or devotion to his mistress

—Coralie was worshipped by her *valetaille*—prudently omitted to mention that the senator was not alone. He had viewed the tête-à-tête with a measure of disapproval. Perhaps he had heard things; perhaps he had not. How much or how little these mute witnesses suspect or know of our actions often remains an unsolved mystery. If some scandals break out through domestics, more are stifled. Mr. and Mrs. Thorne's household were faithfully attached to them.

How could Brien imagine that Mrs. Thorne would have the insane idea of following her husband! She, however, decided to do so. Supposing him to have gone in the direction he in fact did take, she sauntered up Connecticut Avenue. She hoped to meet him on his way back.

The shower alarmed her, and she

crossed to return, when happened what we know. In the flight homeward, umbrellaless, the rain plashing on her hair, she was haunted by the look of fear on her husband's face.

Fear! Of what, then? Of her? There could be no further doubts.

That he, on her birthday, could first ask her and then take that other one was of small consequence. The clew was in his apprehension. Yes—she divined it in his eyes when they met hers.

What had she sunk to, then?

The acute distress to which she had been prey for the past year, with its strange accesses of torpor—the rack and thumb-screw of shaken confidence, hurt *amour propre*, humbled pride, despised affection—left her impotent to bear one more indignity.

Coralie was what is called a virtuous woman; she was certainly a strong

one. But we expect too much of virtue. We are too surprised when it proves vulnerable. The human remains human. She had marked her husband's growing passion for Mrs. Arden. She had gauged it clearly. She realized that in herself was growing a canker of hate, which was belittling and degrading.

She had thus far opened but one note, and that by accident, but she wondered if the day would come when she should lay traps to get his letters and read them secretly and perhaps reseal them, lest he know that a detective lurked in his house. Nay, perhaps, since there had been a question of letters at the club, she would send a servant there with one of his cards and get what went there for him, and know the truth.

These morbid broodings frightened

her at times with their demoniac promptings.

There is no doubt about it that a husband's infidelity remains under all aspects a humiliation. If beloved, there is pain; if not, there is at least offence.

What had she sunk to?

One of those wives from whom men shrink? whom they cheat and lie to and laugh at with their friends? whose suspicions become a by-word, whose furies are town property?

It is needless to say that such a dread on the part of Coralie Darrell Thorne was without foundation. Her wide popularity, her noble personality, her brilliant intelligence, made of her a picturesque figure and a salient one. She could never be the plain appendage of a fascinating and neglectful husband. But in such crises

women of her type do not stop to weigh.

When she unfastened her wet cloak and pushed back her damp hair, a great, wild thirst to revenge herself for the injustice done her, the false position she was thrust into, ravaged her soul. Then he had come; and we know how she met him.

She stood dry-lipped, wide-pupilled, staring at his drawn face, at that dark drop which seemed to her to grow wider and wider, until it drowned them both in its red tide. And as she looked, a great reaction of pity—of pity for him, for herself, for the woe of the world—overcame her; pity, that agonizing snare of tender spirits!

A cry burst from her lips.

Thorne, with the unerring prescience of his keen reasoning, knew that this hour was a landmark of their

destinies. With a gesture full of manly grace, he seized the fingers that had dealt the blow and raised them to his lips.

"Thank you," he said.

The sight of his wife's hurrying figure, alone in the storm, under the hoofs, while he and Mrs. Arden throned insolently above her, had sobered him, as a drunkard is sobered, brought back to himself by nervous shock. And between Mrs. Arden and himself the few words spoken at her door at parting seemed to raise a barrier of new resolves and better purposes.

She, too, had seen and had been sorry, and not triumphant. "It was bad taste in me," she thought, repenting of her afternoon's exploit. "And he thought so, too." In her mortification she grew contemptuous. "I detest married men, and always have, and

I have got through with them." How long such moods can last is a matter of conjecture, but the arrow that shapes fate is often winged in a second's interval.

It would seem, therefore, as if the readjustment of the future devolved on Coralie herself.

So at least felt Thorne. . . .

"I haven't come to excuse myself," he said to her—she had sunk to a chair and he stood before her, his handkerchief pressed to his cheek. "This was your birthday. You were poorly. It was my place and should have been my pleasure to come direct from the Capitol to you. Believe me, however, when I say that nothing more unpremeditated could have occurred than my meeting with Mrs. Arden. She happened to pass in the street as I was examining the horses. It was getting

late. I offered to drive her home. That is all. Only I realize how it must have seemed to you, and I am most regretful. I ask your pardon. You are hereafter safe from any more stupidities of mine."

Always generous, Coralie did not taunt him with the detail that when she met them they were far from Leah's street. She only bowed her head, and he went on.

"I haven't forgotten, Coralie, what you were to me when Tony died, though I may sometimes seem to you indifferent and preoccupied. The cares of my career . . ."

She rose and walked over to the mantel-piece and gazed at herself in the mirror that hung above it.

"I am making acquaintance with myself over again," she said. "We grow old several times."

"You shall not grow old through me, my dear child," he said, with emotion, making a movement as if to take her in his arms. "I . . ."

"You see," she said, "it is not of you I am thinking in the least to-day; it is of myself."

He still moved forward, but she drew back, and her glance arrested him with its menace.

Its pity had passed.

"Yes, of myself; and it is time. My dignity is precious to me, my character. Do you ever think, Hazard, what character means? Mine was well enough in its way, not mean, not petty, I think."

"Ah, never, never!" he interrupted.

She went on: "Lately it has changed. It is dwindling, shrinking, blackening. I see it as it will be

soon. I must save it. It cries out to me!"

He was painfully impressed with the poignancy of her words. "How she must have suffered!" he thought. "How blind I have been!"

She continued: "And I will hear its voice. Oh, don't overrate me. When I release you——"

He started.

"When I release you from the trammels that weigh on us both, it is through no enthusiastic desire for your welfare, through no self-surrender of my privileges as mistress of your house that another may fill the place better. What will be your emancipation will also be mine. It isn't happiness I expect or give. I doubt if this is the way to that. It will be for me salvation of what was best in me, of what there was in my nature that I prized. I know

that I am not a beautiful woman, but I am not a base one. I do not accept the chain that makes me so."

"You were always magnanimous," he murmured, marvelling that of her rival she did not speak one bitter word, "and I unworthy."

She was on her feet again. She wavered a moment, tall and uncertain in the light of the candles and the flame that lighted the hearth with bluish gleams. Then she left him alone—as she had done before when he had come to her with Leah Arden's opened letter. Only now he recognised that something irrevocable lay between them, an impassable gulf, a wide ocean in which he vainly flaunted signals of his distress. She was steering away from him, for shores distant and impalpable, which, in his earthiness, he could but dimly guess at, and he felt

left behind to drift alone on a silent and inexorable sea.

Coralie, once more in her room, threw herself on her bed in an agony of sobs too fierce for a woman's frame. Old happiness, old affliction came, ghostlike visitants, to lean over her in her desolate lament.

She recalled one day when in the Bois in Paris, she and Arthur Penfold hunted for wild flowers together, under the wet leaves of the moist wood-paths.

It was one of those unforgotten days that haunt the memory with their eternal and abiding regret. They loved each other perfectly on that sweet morning of youth and hope, with the bird-notes in their ears and the spring sunshine above them.

She remembered the thrill of her baby boy's soft mouth at her breast;

the tiny, clinging hands of her first-born, the brave male child she had rocked on her bosom in all a mother's exaltation. She thought of his lonely grave on the Hudson where autumn leaves lay thick and winter snows. "O Tony, Tony!" she cried, "I do not forget thee, my beloved, my beloved!"

She longed for the clasp of a loving hand, and would have called Viva, the dear living child. But Viva had gone with her governess to visit a young friend in the country. So that this hour of despairing abandonment found her alone.

All hours, gay or terrible, drop to eternity. So this one passed.

A few days later society was distressed to hear that Mrs. Thorne was ill of a cerebral fever.

Mrs. Safford, telegraphed for, came to the summons.

Thorne was exemplary in his solicitude and his attentions. In the rapid changes from delirium to stupor she did not seem to heed his nearness or his absences. There is nothing so dividing or so baffling as the vagaries of hallucination. He had the chilling sense that she had slipped out of his reach forever.

One afternoon—when she was convalescing—a nurse called Mrs. Safford. A lady who declined to give her card had begged that some one from the sick-room should speak with her.

Genevieve went down the marble stairs. She raised the heavy portière that hung before the door of the large drawing-room. Perfect order reigned; the tall palms, lately changed, stood freshly green in their pots of delft and majolica; the vases on all the tables

and étagères were filled with long-stemmed roses; logs burned on the hearth. Nevertheless, to Genevieve the room appeared curiously rigid without the spirit that usually pervaded it. Where the arrangement of bric-à-brac, books and tea-tables is left to menials, there is but empty splendour—a missed meaning.

A lady was standing at one of the windows, looking out. She turned as Genevieve advanced to greet her. It was Mrs. Arden.

Coralie's wan appearance was still oppressing Mrs. Safford. Brain fever is a devastating demon that plays havoc with the strongest constitution. Coralie's, always rugged and buoyant, had conquered. But dire indeed were the ravages of the battle. Her falling hair cut short hung about her cheeks; her eyes, unnaturally large, had a wild-

ness in them; the nose sharpened, the mouth parched, the wasted fingers from which the rings rolled off—she looked a wreck of her former self.

Her room arranged for illness, the mirrors covered that she might not see in them the faces she insisted mocked at her from their depths, all the paraphernalia of sickness gave the charming apartment the air of a hospital. It had become the refuge of disease, of possible death. Here, on the contrary, in this lofty salon, was gathered only what could decorate and embellish, and Mrs. Arden's girlish form detaching itself from shadow seemed to Genevieve the fitting goddess of the shrine.

Her curly auburn hair was dressed in the latest mode, voluminously rolled to frame her face under her little fur cap. It perched coquettishly above the lovely brow, wide as Clytie's, low as

Faustina's. The purple eyes under dark lashes looked out serene and innocent from the glowing face. The crisp air without, the warmth within, gave her lips and cheeks more than their usual colour. Leah Arden, in her taut brown dress and soft dark furs, was the embodiment of roseate health and luscious womanhood. She carried a bunch of orchids in her hand.

The contrast was so violent between the woman she had left and this fair creature that Genevieve, who was not without imagination, felt her heart contract.

They had met once or twice, and they shook hands.

"I must apologize to you," said Mrs. Arden, in her rich voice, "but I have been dreadfully worried about Mrs. Thorne, and I wouldn't be put off any longer with vague reports in the street

and at the door. I wanted particularly to see someone who had access to the sick-room and hear if Mrs. Thorne is really and actually out of danger."

"She is out of danger," said Mrs. Safford.

Leah heaved a sigh as of relief, which did not escape Mrs. Safford.

"But she was very ill?"

"So ill that I gave her up for two or three days, but she is pulling through, and now is nicely." Then, being a simple person, and her methods quite crude, she added: "The senator was in despair."

The words were barely uttered when the despairing gentleman pushed through the curtain and came in. Nothing could have been more correct than their greeting—his "How kind of you! Mrs. Thorne will, I hope, see you herself in a week's time," and her "I

am so pleased to hear that all is well"—utterly banal, well-bred and decorous. The man, as is the manner of men, concealed his discomposure better than the woman, whose furious flush Genevieve noticed.

Leah covered her confusion by handing Mrs. Safford the bouquet.

"These are from mamma and me," she said, "for Mrs. Thorne."

After a few more inquiries and answers Thorne accompanied her to the door, which the servant opened for her exit.

He returned to the drawing-room.

He could not know how far Mrs. Safford was admitted to his wife's confidence, but he felt that at all costs this call must not be mentioned to Coralie, or the flowers given.

He was uneasy. His calm was ruffled. Genevieve saw her advantage, as

she had seen much and guessed more. She would not have been a woman and loyal to her friend if she had not secretly enjoyed his evident discomfiture.

"I must go right up to Coralie with Mrs. Arden's flowers," she said. "Orchids are so frail they must be put into water at once. It would be too bad that these should fade."

Here was a quandary! A person who is but just out of the clutches of brain fever can hardly be approached with the subject that unbalanced.

He cleared his throat, with a detaining finger on Genevieve's sleeve.

"Why, Coralie is particularly fond of orchids," she said. "Why am I not, then, to take her these?"

Then Thorne said: "Some day when she is well again I will explain to you; now all I ask is that you do not mention Mrs. Arden's visit—or the flow-

ers." It had to be done. It was the lesser of two evils.

Then Genevieve knew.

She threw Leah Arden's orchids from her to the table. They rolled off the edge to the floor, and she did not stoop to pick them up.

"Oh!" she said, with a mocking inflection, and left the room, and the senator was very uncomfortable indeed.

Leah Arden was unhappy. Between her and Thorne no spoken or written word had passed since the night of the fatal drive. Mrs. Thorne's illness alarmed her. A keen remorse, foreign to her habitual insouciance, so possessed her that she determined to call in self-abnegation and self-defence. Why not? There was no break between her and the Thornes, and he should see and she should see that a

mere friendly sentiment animated her toward them both.

Her immense emotion on seeing him again proved to her that toward him, at least, her friendliness was but a word.

"Who was it?" asked Coralie, sitting up against her pillows with her pinched, haggard face, which a few weeks seemed to have strangely aged.

"Lady Lightpace," said Mrs. Safford, cheerfully, and with unblushing glibness. "She left many messages from herself and the ambassador."

"Ah—such a kind woman! What did you say to her?"

"That you were going to get well directly, and so, darling, lie down now and try to sleep. You know the doctor forbids you to sit too long in this position."

"Oh, what does it matter, when

everything is weariness!" Then suddenly she threw one arm about Mrs. Safford's neck, drawing her cheek down to her own. "Thank you for your goodness to me, dear," she said, and the sad lips trembled.

Mrs. Safford, unable longer to control herself, beckoned to the nurse and slipped from the detaining arm. In her own room, the tears she shed were the saddest of a happy life.

## VI

It was the following year that Coralie left her husband.

She waited until his term expired. She had no wish to injure him.

When she took the step even Mrs. Safford—at first, at least—disapproved.

"I think you are too hard," she said.

"I was becoming wicked. You don't understand. The concessions of natures like mine are not honest. The reactions are too terrible. I dare not make them."

But Genevieve shook her head, impatient, as are good women who have no grievances. She sent Joseph Turtle to remonstrate.

He was ushered one day, fresh from Persia, into the Long Island house where Viva and her mother were living in seclusion. Thorne was in New York, back at his law practice. Joseph had been recalled.

"They are indecent people," he said to his dear Coralie. "The Shah is an indecent man. I told him so. He complained to our Secretary of State. I was ordered home."

Coralie could not help laughing. He was unchanged.

"My poor Joe," she said, "I'm afraid diplomacy wasn't your vocation."

Yet Genevieve had sent him now on a delicate mission, and he acquitted himself with feeling. The two old friends talked long and gravely. He implored her to pause, reflect, take advice; but Coralie said to him: "I have

been in hell, and it consumed me. Love and hate came together. I will not go back to them. It is finished."

And this plain man, who could insult a ruler in his own realm and inveigh against customs that Providence permits, to the detriment of his own fortunes, gave her the only entire sympathy others denied.

Darrell, indeed, said to her: "The decision must be yours. Whatever you do, I will stand by you." But she tacitly avoided, at this moment, calling on him for counsel.

Thorne felt himself aggrieved and wounded. He had not thought of a broken-up home. He detested the vulgarity of it all—the discredit and odium. He had imagined, the fever once abated, she would return to calmer judgment—she on whose strength he had so often leaned. If sometimes a

rush of ecstasy at the thought of freedom, and what it might bring to him, shot across his consciousness, it was instantly repudiated. He did and said everything that man can say or do to dissuade her from the final step. His actions, as his arguments, were vain. Did she secretly guess a lack of sincerity in his attitude? Perhaps.

Six months after their separation Mrs. Thorne obtained a dissolution of her marriage for incompatibility.

A year later it was rumoured that Mrs. Arden's case was in the docket. Before it came up her husband died.

Then Thorne and Mrs. Arden went away together one afternoon to a provincial town and got themselves married as best they might. If the ceremony was not quite "regular," it was supposed to suffice.

Of course, this *dénouement* brought back the chilly critics to Coralie's support, tongues were loosed, suppositions raged, sides were taken.

She and Viva—who remained with her by Thorne's consent—slipped away quietly to Italy. She purchased a fine villa out of Rome. She began a new existence.

Thorne's friends gathered to him—and Mrs. Arden's. They tried to persuade him to brave things out; offered to boom him for Mayor, for Governor, for President. His new wife declared she disliked politics and wanted to travel. So he was unmindful of these detaining decoys—he whose air-castles they had once been. They started for distant lands.

It was quite three years afterward that a choice party of half a dozen

friends were breakfasting one morning in Singleton Ackley's pretty dining-room. The Thornes and their concerns were already worn-out themes. The causes of their rupture, her expatriation, his remarriage, were ancient history. To-day, however, a lady present —Mrs. Heathcote—had something to say of them.

"Whom do you think I met in Paris the other day? Hazard Thorne!"

"Fancy! One hardly ever hears of them. And Leah—did you see her?"

"Yes, I saw her, but only for a moment at the play one evening. We spoke in the foyer."

"How did they look?" asked the chorus of voices.

"Thorne came to see me."

The women were particularly keen to hear of this visit. "Is he still a

*charmeur*, still the same? Does he seem happy?"

"He came to my hotel one day," said Mrs. Heathcote, "and sent up his card. I was at home. The colonel was out, and so I had him all to myself."

"Do they live in Paris?" asked Mrs. Gresham.

"They have taken a villa at Versailles."

"Go on," said the chorus.

"Well, then, don't interrupt. You ask how he looks, if he is happy. He is so disgustingly happy that it made me sick!"

"What!" screamed the women.

"Positively ill! And as to looks—he is as fat as a seal and as cumbrous as a walrus. He used to be attractive when he posed for incompleteness, you know, but now that he has found his

mate he is as stupid as an owl and as dull as an Englishman!"

Laughter greeted this sally.

"When Englishmen are at their dullest," said Ackley, smiling, "you may depend on it they are plotting somebody's downfall; they are never so dangerous as at the moment when they rob their countenances of all expression."

"Well," said Mrs. Heathcote, laughing, "he seems too *abruti* to plot destruction, yet he was quite communicative; perhaps an exaction of his new wife's. Somehow I thought she had sent him. He told me his days were one long delight; his Leah perfect; his soul—Heaven save the mark!—satisfied. The creature came up in the lift to deliver himself of all this. He was absolutely revolting. And I used to admire him!"

"And Leah?" said Mrs. Gresham—"are her violet eyes as beautiful as ever?"

"Her eyes! why, I couldn't see them!"

"Couldn't see them?"

"No; she, too, is so fat they have disappeared."

"Is it possible," murmured Mrs. Eustis, "that this is the end of their romance? Avoirdupois! How dreadfully discouraging!"

"Were you plotting to elope, my dear?" said her husband.

"But what does he do," asked Mrs. Lorimer, "at Versailles?"

"Do? Why, nothing," said Mrs. Heathcote, with a curve of her lip. "He loves his Leah."

"And he has no further desires, hopes, ambitions, he who was so wide-awake, energetic, aspiring?"

"He loves his Leah," repeated Mrs. Heathcote.

Then Warren Vincent spoke. "It was Mrs. Thorne," he said, "who made him. Mrs. Arden has undone him."

"A late tribute," said Mrs. Eustis, who had heard Vincent's earlier opinions.

"She was no friend to me ever," said Vincent, very low. "She always disliked me, but I have a sense of justice."

"Happiness," said Singleton Ackley, "is not always uplifting, and entire sympathy may bring stagnation; the friction that irritates may spur and stimulate, while softness unmans."

"But at least they do seem happy?" Mrs. Eustis persisted.

"Perfectly so," said Mrs. Heathcote, "without a regret. Leah told me they were entirely congenial."

"And Coralie—who has seen her?" asked Mrs. Gresham.

"I have," said Mrs. Lorimer.

"And I have," said Ackley.

"And is she perfectly happy, too?" They looked at one another, and then Ackley said:

"I was in Rome, and so was Mrs. Lorimer, last winter. We had the pleasure of dining together at Villa Arquata with Mrs. Darrell-Thorne—so she now calls herself. I did not think she looked perfectly happy; did you?"

"No, rather sad," said Mrs. Lorimer; "but she was very well dressed and not in the least fat."

"That is always something," murmured Warren Vincent.

"She looked remarkably well," said Ackley, "almost handsome; while the girl is a stunning beauty."

"Ah, yes—Viva. Is she grown up?"

"Yes, and a success; lots of young princes after her. When her mother looks at her there is satisfaction, and no wonder."

"I thought her much more interesting than she used to be—Coralie, I mean," said Mrs. Lorimer. "She is very stately. She was always a noble sort of woman, and her face, though older, is wonderfully fine now. Don't you think so, Mr. Ackley? Looks like Marie Antoinette on her way to execution, and that sort of thing. She told me she was often homesick, that the mere life of amusement Americans lived in Europe didn't satisfy her. She should always feel an alien. She says she feels she owes to herself something better, and only remains to give Viva the advantages she didn't herself have.

The girl has a talent for sculpture, models pretty heads. Mrs. Thorne says she thinks girls brought up in Europe are simpler, more easily satisfied, than ours, yet she means to return to her own country soon. She says it's good enough for her, and must be for Viva. I hear she has written a play, and a dramatic critic who has read it wants it brought out—thinks it quite wonderful."

"She was always clever," said Mrs. Gresham.

"In the meantime, she has made for herself an excellent position. Their house is quite gay. It is the dearest place, an old thirteenth-century villa, with falconries, oubliettes, and trapdoors; enchanting."

"Mrs. Thorne has elements of greatness," said Ackley. "I am inclined to agree with Vincent that she made her

husband. Thorne had weaknesses of character. He lost something in losing her."

"Nobody seems ever to quite understand why she left him," said Mrs. Gresham.

"Safford says," said Mr. Ackley—"and as his wife is her best friend he may know something about it—that she felt herself dwarfed and cramped and hampered by those weaknesses I speak of. In other words, she tried to make him fly, and failing, decided to let him fall."

"That is Nietzsche's advice," said Horace Eustis, "but it is hardly Christian."

"Who knows? She may have been swimming to save herself. The sequel proved *il y avait de quoi.* It may have been a case of 'cut it off and cast it from thee.'"

"What a hopeless jangle!" sighed Mrs. Eustis.

"If everybody walks off because husbands are not entirely satisfactory," said Mrs. Lorimer, "there'll be a general stampede. I think people may as well stick it out. I mean to."

"But if Thorne is happy," said Mrs. Heathcote, ironically, "he, at least, has nothing to complain of. What more can he ask?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Eustis, "unless a happiness that deteriorates us, as Mr. Ackley says——"

"My dear lady," said her host, laughing, "my opinion isn't worth a farthing."

"Unless a happiness that deteriorates us," she went on, "is not the end of our life, and life itself not meant to be a love-dream."

"He told me," said Mrs. Heathcote,

"he had one undying, unforgiving, implacable enemy."

"Who is that?" asked Ackley, taking off his glasses.

"Hamilton Darrell."

THE END

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